

Sustain STEPS[®] to Excellence for Health Visitors

East of England Evaluation Report



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1. Conclusion

Health Education East of England (HEEoE) and health visiting services are consistent in their feedback that the Sustain STEPS® to Excellence programme has produced a wide range of benefits to health visiting services and organisations across the East of England, including:

- improved resilience and staff morale
- reduced sickness levels and increased productivity
- more empowered staff as a result of increased confidence, self-belief and motivation
- a more positive atmosphere within the workplace
- increased proactivity and willingness to volunteer for additional responsibilities
- increased ability to successfully manage change
- improved team-working and communication
- more staff proactively seeking personal and professional development opportunities
- improved ability to manage stress
- the opportunity to upskill staff as facilitators who can deliver the cost-effective, sustainable model to colleagues

Significantly, clinicians are also identifying a positive impact on many families across the region, as health visitors have started use the tools from Sustain STEPS® to help parents and children:

- build their confidence and self-belief
- work through more problems themselves
- set achievable personal goals
- improve their resilience and emotional wellbeing
- develop strategies to manage post-natal depression
- overcome a fear of giving birth



2. Summary

2.1 The impact of Sustain STEPS®

Sustain STEPS® to Excellence is a highly acclaimed three-day personal effectiveness course which has been specifically adapted to meet the needs of the NHS. It aims to give delegates the necessary tools to improve their working and personal lives by increasing their motivation, empowering them to take on greater responsibility and giving them the confidence to change.

It is being rolled out to more than 1,000 health visiting staff across the East of England. Between June 2014 and July 2015, more than 650 people completed the course, with services reporting a wide range of benefits for teams, individuals and families in their care. Each of those courses was evaluated on completion by each delegate, and received positive feedback against seven key outcomes, which are:

| Course outcomes | Positive rating* |
|--|------------------|
| Feeling positive about myself | 99% |
| Raising my confidence levels | 98% |
| Expanding my comfort zones | 98% |
| Controlling my anxiety levels and stress | 95% |
| Goal-setting | 98% |
| Getting along with others | 98% |
| Taking responsibility for myself | 98% |

*Percentage of all delegates who attended the course and gave a positive rating for each specific outcome

This document seeks to build upon these post-course evaluations and provides a more detailed review several months after the courses were run and where a significant proportion of the team have completed the programme.



This diagram shows the correlation between the benefits reported by teams and the course aims.

| Benefits noted by services and individuals | Course aims | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|-----------------------------|--|
| | Extra motivation and self-belief to take on the challenges in their profession and/or organisation | The confidence to deal with change and reach their full potential | The ability to improve their working relationships | Greater expectations of success and higher self-efficacy | An improved ability to set goals and think more effectively | A better understanding of the impact of their own behaviour and that of others | The confidence to challenge | A better understanding and awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses |
| Cost effective train the trainer model has helped develop individual staff and ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Improved resilience and morale among staff and reduced sickness levels, in turn increasing productivity | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Increased confidence, motivation and positivity and an improved atmosphere within the workplace | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| More staff showing willingness to volunteer for additional roles or responsibilities and proactively seek out opportunities for personal development | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Positive changes within staff, including an increased ability to manage change, improved team-working and communication | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Increased confidence and self-belief among staff, in turn empowering them to embrace leadership and apply for more senior roles | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Benefits outside of work, including improved stress management and work-life balance, in turn increasing productivity and job satisfaction | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |

More significantly, the programme has also had a positive impact on many families across the region, with health visitors using the tools from Sustain STEPS® to:

- build self-belief so that families can take control and work through problems themselves
- motivate families to set achievable goals and improve their emotional wellbeing
- help parents overcome post-natal depression
- support antenatal women to overcome a fear of giving birth

This document brings together background information about the Sustain STEPS® to Excellence programme and its development, as well as individual case studies focussing on four services in the eastern region who have made significant progress on implementing the programme.

2.2 Background

Sustain STEPS® to Excellence was launched across the East of England in 2012 following a successful pilot at East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH).

It was specially adapted and enhanced for use within the NHS by Sustain Improvement, and is based on research carried out by The Pacific Institute® in the field of cognitive psychology. Its core principle is that each person has an unlimited capacity for growth and creativity, and can adapt readily to change. Its aim is to break down self-imposed barriers to happiness, success and fulfilment by helping delegates get a clear picture of themselves, their environment, habits, attitudes and potential goals.

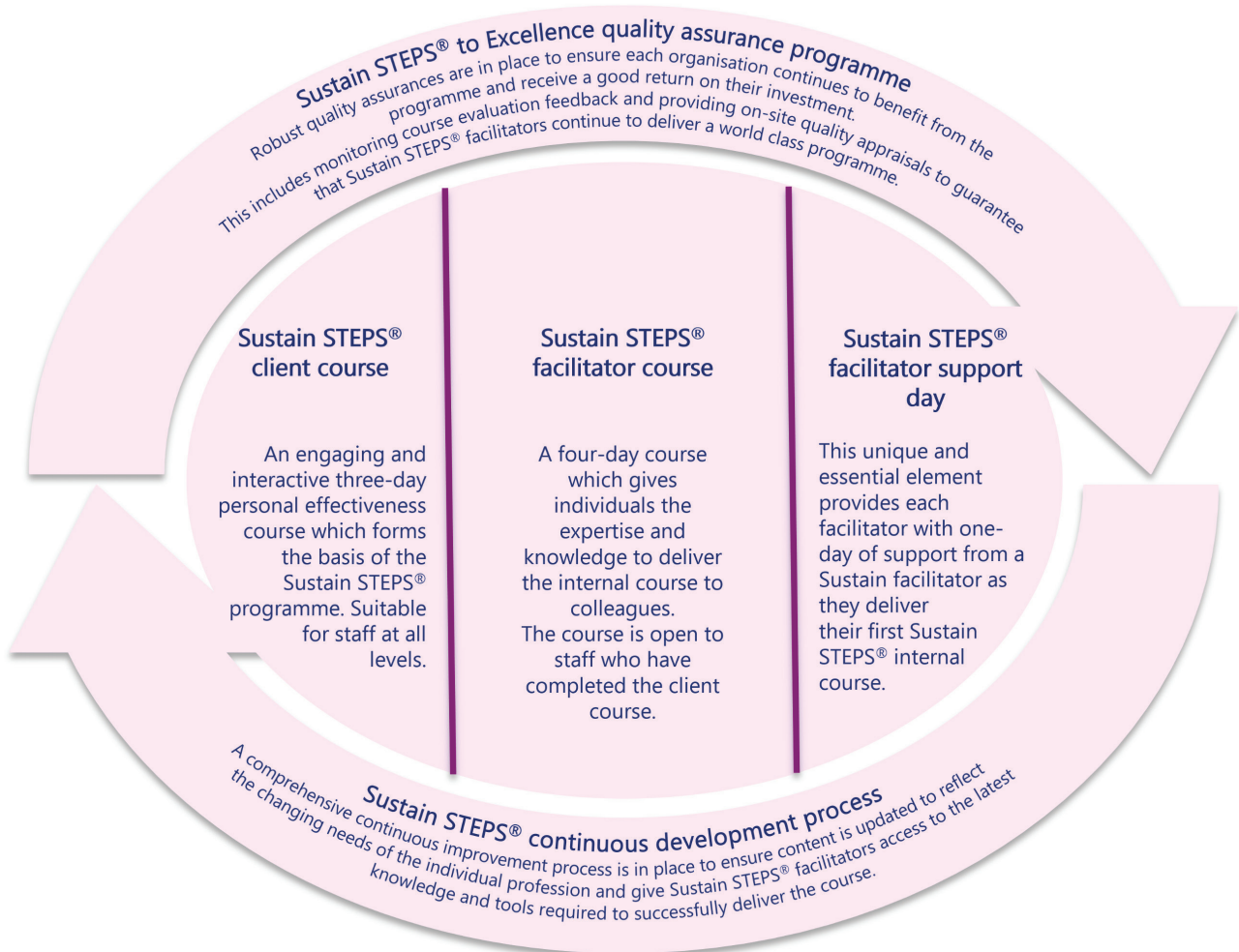
The first iteration of the programme was for health visiting, with the specific aim of helping the profession deliver the Healthy Child Programme and successfully respond to the challenges of Health Visitor Implementation Plan – A Call to Action.

Following its success with health visiting, Sustain STEPS® has been adapted for school nurses and healthcare assistants, and is now being rolled out to local government. Current developments include community nursing and child and adult mental health services.

2.3 How the Sustain STEPS® to Excellence programme works

The complete Sustain STEPS® to Excellence programme is made up of five linked elements which give organisations the opportunity to build the internal expertise required to deliver, continuously improve and develop the three-day client course for their staff.

They are:



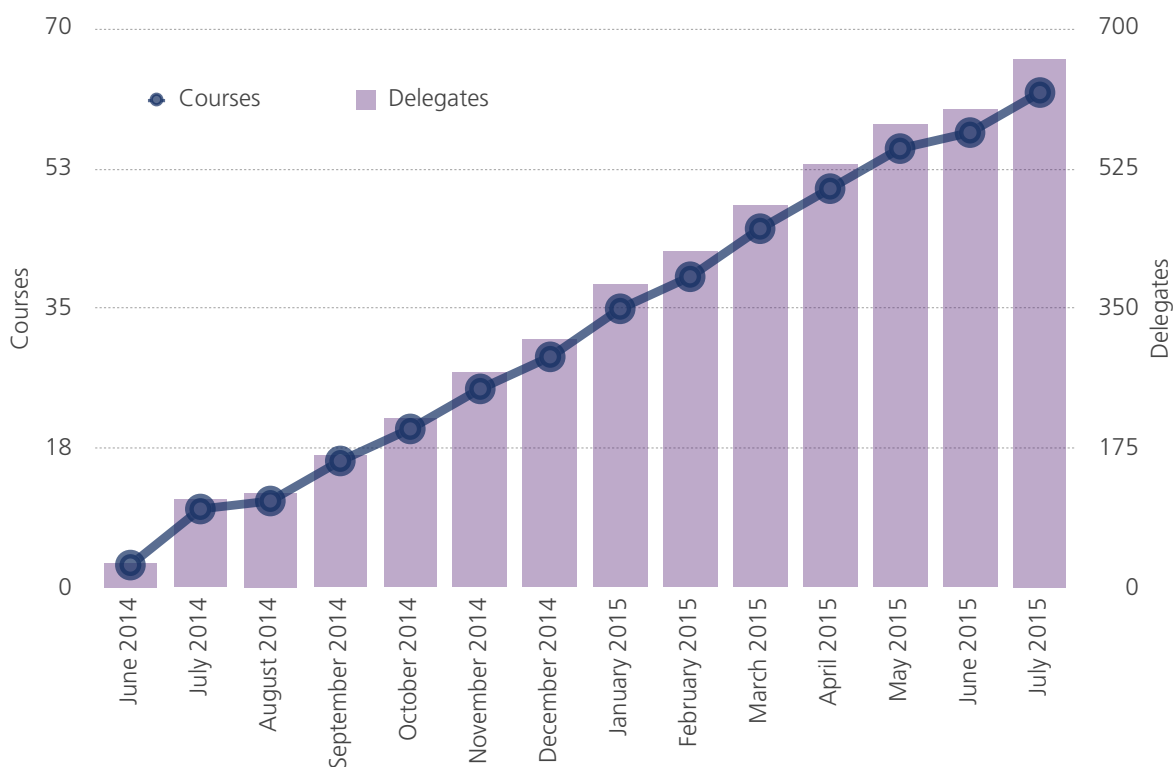
By offering a train the trainer element, Sustain STEPS® presents organisations with a valuable opportunity to upskill their own staff while offering a good return on investment.

2.4 Evaluation from the East of England

Sustain STEPS® to Excellence for health visiting was successfully piloted at East Coast Community Healthcare in 2012 and was subsequently endorsed by Health Education East of England. To date, it has been commissioned by:

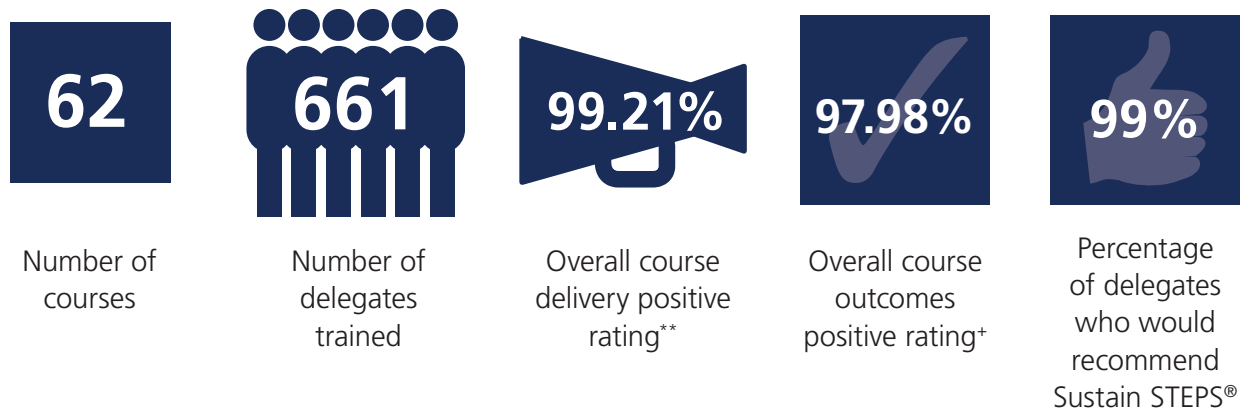
- Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust (NCH&C)
- East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH)
- Provide
- Anglian Community Enterprise (ACE)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT)
- Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust
- SEPT West Essex
- SEPT South East Essex
- SEPT Bedfordshire
- North East London NHS Foundation Trust

The graph below shows cumulative figures for the number of courses which have taken place and the number of delegates trained between June 2014 and July 2015, illustrating the increasing impact which Sustain STEPS® has had upon the health visiting profession.



Feedback from the programme has been overwhelmingly positive, as illustrated below:

Sustain STEPS® for health visitors*

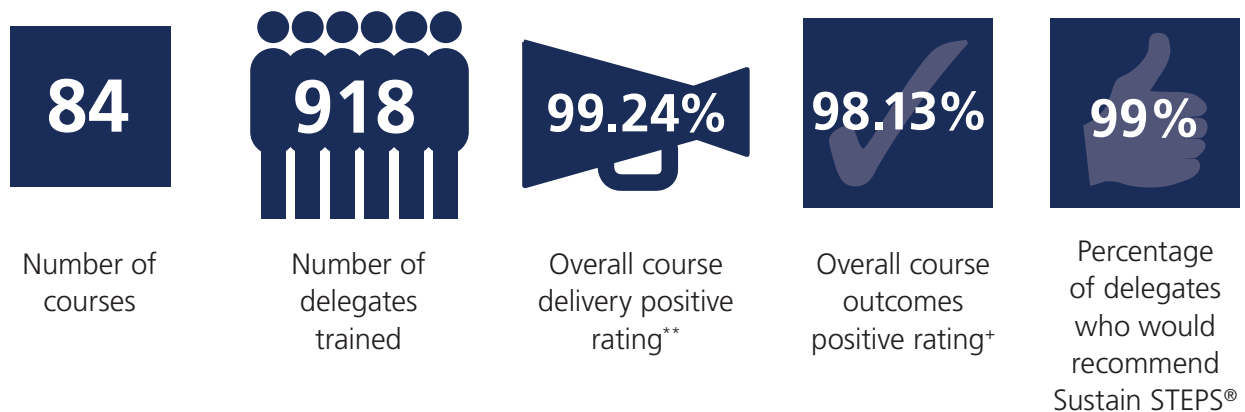


* Figures until end of July 2015

** Average based on delegate scores against 12 criteria which measure the way the course is delivered

⁺ Average based on delegate scores against the seven course content measures detailed in section 2.1

Sustain STEPS® for all professions (health visitors, school nurses and healthcare assistants)*



* Figures until end of July 2015

** Average based on delegate scores against 12 criteria which measure the way the course is delivered

⁺ Average based on delegate scores against the seven course content measures detailed in section 2.1

The following pages bring together case studies from organisations across the region to provide more information about the impact the programme has had on individual services.

3. Case studies

3.1 Health Education East of England (HEEoE)

3.1.1 Background

Health Education East of England (HEEoE) is the local education and training board which covers Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. It concentrates on driving up quality in four main areas: planning, education and training, workforce transformation and leadership.

One of HEEoE's key responsibilities is ensuring continuous improvement in the education, training and development which is available to health and care staff in the East of England so that they are able to respond effectively to the needs of the 5.8m people who live in the region. Its budget for this work is nearly £400m.

HEEoE worked with Sustain to pilot Sustain STEPS® to Excellence at East Coast Community Healthcare in late 2012 to help staff meet the challenges of the Health Visitor Implementation Plan – A Call to Action. It prompted such positive feedback that the course was soon made available to services across the region.

3.1.2 Key findings:

- The train the trainer model was key and ensured the long-term sustainability of the programme while making best use of the limited funding available
- The programme has lots of potential applications – both inside and out of the health service
- HEEoE has received “extremely positive” feedback from every organisation taking part
- Services are reporting greater motivation and confidence within teams, which has delivered knock-on benefits for the families in their care
- The train the trainer element has offered valuable opportunities for personal development
- The benefits of the programme have spread beyond the workplace into individual's personal lives, in turn boosting morale by helping staff feel valued by their employer

3.1.3 “The faith we showed in the programme has been justified”

A senior NHS manager who helped introduce Sustain STEPS® to Excellence to health visitors across the east of England says the faith she showed in the programme has been justified after it triggered a palpable change in staff motivation and confidence levels.

Julia Whiting, Health Visiting Programme Lead for Health Education East of England (HEEoE), worked alongside Sustain to pilot the course with East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH) in late 2012.

It proved such a success and prompted such excellent feedback that HEEoE decided to make the programme available to other services across the region.



“We were looking for a leadership programme which would help staff meet the challenges of the Call to Action,” said Julia. “Resources were limited and funding for the project was not recurrent, which meant we needed something sustainable which offered value for money. The train the trainer element was key to this as it would allow us to continue training the significant numbers of health visitors who were coming through the system in future years without needing to invest in further courses.

“Sustain STEPS® met this criteria and the feedback we received from the pilot with ECCH was so good that we decided to offer the programme more widely.

“I definitely feel the faith we showed in the programme has been justified. The organisations who have completed the training have been extremely positive, and two which initially didn’t take the programme have now come on board as well, which speaks for itself.”

Julia said she had received extensive feedback from services across the region, who have reported greater motivation within their teams which has delivered knock-on benefits for families in their care.

“Services can see a palpable change in many of their staff,” she added. “Motivation levels have gone up and some staff have found the confidence to apply for promotions or higher level posts.

“The train the trainer element has also brought big benefits as has given people the opportunity for personal development by signing up as a facilitator. It has opened the doors to other opportunities for those people, which is great for workforce development.

“Health visitors across the region were facing some enormous challenges as a result of the Call to Action, which included growing the workforce by an average of 60 to 70% while trying to change the way the services were delivered at the same time. Sustain STEPS® gave everybody involved the chance to take three days of their extremely busy and challenging day-to-day work and think about their own development and goals, which has been incredibly valuable.”

Having completed the course herself earlier this year, Julia admits she was “very impressed” by the content. She added: “I would definitely recommend it because it is applicable to a whole range of scenarios and has lots of potential applications both inside and out of the health service.

“It is also a valuable personal development tool which brings just as many benefits to people’s own lives and relationships as it does their work. Those who have completed the course appreciate that.

“To have a programme which can meet a whole range of needs in that way is very valuable.”



3.2 Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust (NCH&C)

3.2.1 Background

Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust (NCH&C) is one of the largest providers of community health and care services in the NHS, and serves a population of 882,000 people across Norfolk.

It employs 2,250 full time equivalent members of staff, 80% of which are clinical. Its health visiting team delivers services for children aged up to five and works in collaboration with GPs, children's centres and community services to deliver services based on the needs of the children and families.

NCH&C ran its first Sustain STEPS® course in June 2014 and has trained more than 200 staff within 14 months of rolling out the programme.

3.2.2 Key findings:

- Managers are reporting improvements to staff confidence, self-esteem and team-working as well as more positivity in the workplace
- Staff are using the tools to motivate vulnerable families to set achievable goals, overcome entrenched negative perceptions and boost their wellbeing
- Three days protected time away from practice was crucial and helped individual staff feel valued
- The programme would prove especially beneficial to children's centre staff and social workers
- Facilitators enjoy delivering the course and say they gain something new from it each time
- The course has proved so successful within NCH&C's health visiting teams that it is being rolled out more widely to nursery nurses, school nurses and assistants

3.2.3 "By the end of the course they reach the top of the ladder and appreciate the view is amazing"

Senior managers leading a health visiting team in Norfolk have praised Sustain STEPS® to Excellence for changing mindsets, helping staff to set more goals and instilling a positive new culture across the early years' service.

Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust (NCH&C) began rolling out the training to health visitors in summer 2014. It has proved such a success that it is now being offered more widely, with all 280 of NCH&C's healthy child programme staff – including school nurses, nursery nurses and assistants – due to complete the course by autumn 2015.

As well as building confidence in staff, Sustain STEPS® has been credited with helping motivate vulnerable families to set achievable goals and boosting teamwork. It has also had an impact



outside of the workplace, with health visitors using the tools they have learnt to map out their own futures more clearly.

“Sustain STEPS® is not about the job you do, but about you as a person and how you grow over the three days,” said Maria Richardson, Head of Locality for North and Broadland with NCH&C. “It has been really well received and has helped our staff to start thinking differently.

“People had a different mindset beforehand and saw KPIs as a box-ticking exercise. Now they appreciate it’s about getting the best service for our families. There is more positivity in the workplace and people are more conscientious and goal-orientated.

“Some of our staff have gone from having low self-esteem and no confidence, for example, to losing weight and completing sporting challenges such as a 26-mile speed walk. For me that is one of the biggest joys of Sustain STEPS® – it spans the personal and professional and can be used effectively both at work and at home.”

Mandy Wagg, Infant Feeding Lead with the trust, is one of seven facilitators trained by NCH&C to deliver Sustain STEPS® to colleagues. She said the course was unlike anything she had ever done before – but had come at just the right time to help health visiting staff who were rising to the challenges of the Call to Action to feel valued.

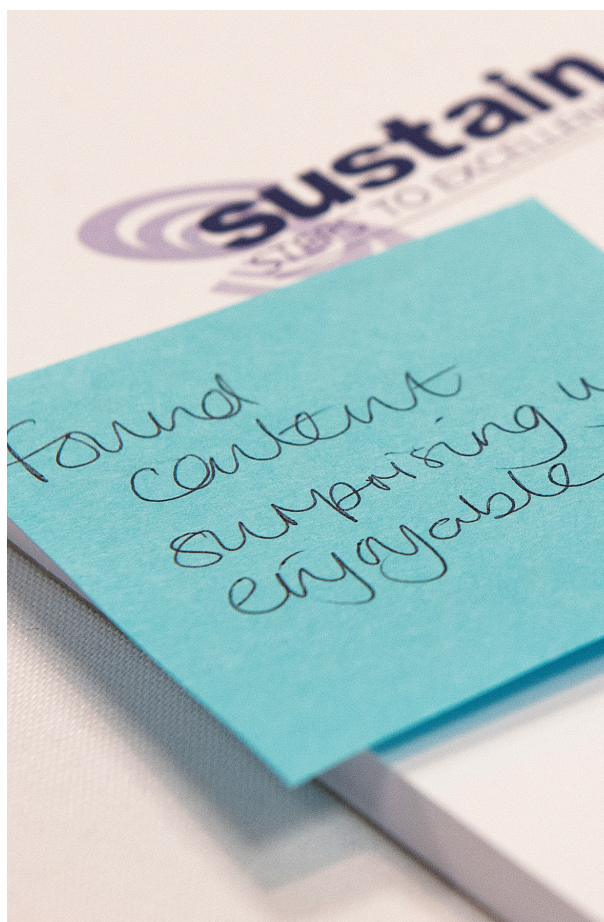
“Before we introduced Sustain STEPS®, our health visitors had highlighted the fact they weren’t receiving any personal development training,” she said. “Hats off to Sustain for listening and delivering what we asked for.

“Personally I am really grateful that I have been given the chance to complete the course and train as a facilitator. It’s been really nice to have the opportunity to do something for us which we can use in our personal lives.

“Sustain STEPS® is almost viewed as mandatory at NCH&C now, which shows its worth and the value we have placed on it.”

Health Visitor and Practice Teacher Glenda Booth, who is based in Norwich, has found the techniques she learnt useful both when working with families and while mentoring students.

She said: “I work in an area with lots of deprivation and have a high safeguarding caseload. It can be hard going as some of these families are very entrenched and do not want to change. But I try and communicate positively with them and help them set achievable goals so that they can change just one thing at a time. Things won’t happen overnight, but helping them develop that vision of where they want to





be means they can then start chipping away at and move towards it one step at a time.

“I try and give positive feedback and always thank my students for their work as it may help motivate them and make them more proactive. I’ve also noticed changes in them since completing Sustain STEPS® as some are now taking the actions they need to complete their preceptorships more quickly, such as volunteering to manage a safeguarding case or attending a conference.

“I think it’s important that people feel valued – especially in the current climate – and Sustain STEPS® has helped with that. It was a nice course and was good to have three protected days away from practice to think clearly about what we do, how we do it and how we manage different situations.

“From a personal point of view, the course also helped me think about my future and decide I’d like to start reducing my hours in the run up to retirement so that I can spend more time with my family.”

Mandy said she felt the programme had massive potential, and could have a huge impact on other professions such as children’s centre staff and social workers.

She explained: “It really does apply to anyone from any walk of life and focuses on personal growth and development. It would be really nice to do it with families as it would empower them to think differently and give them the mind-set to try something new rather than sticking to the things they have always done.

“I loved the course and really enjoy delivering training to colleagues. You get the revisit, relive and recap the concepts and keep using the tools, which is really important. I feel I get something new from it every time.”

Fellow facilitator Maria echoed her views, saying: “I love facilitating – it plays to my strengths and stretches my own comfort zones each time I deliver a course.

“I recommend the course wherever I go and take any opportunity I can to talk about Sustain STEPS®. The support we have received from Sustain has also been excellent – I cannot fault it at all.

“The thing I enjoy the most is watching people grow over the three days. They come in not knowing what to expect or how to get where they want to go. But by the end of the course they have climbed the ladder, are at the top and appreciate that the view is amazing.”

3.3 Provide

3.3.1 Background

Provide Community Interest Company (CIC) delivers a range of community services to more than 1.9m people across Essex, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as well as the London boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge. It provides over 50 services in community hospitals, clinics, schools, nursing homes, primary care settings and within people's homes and employs more than 1,100 staff.

Provide has delivered 12 Sustain STEPS® courses to 129 staff since launching the programme in July 2014.

3.3.2 Key findings:

- Sustain STEPS® has encouraged health visitors to take a different approach with clients, helping them overcome negativity by setting goals and aspirations for the future
- It has given staff the tools to successfully manage change, which is helping them prepare to transfer to public health in autumn 2015
- There is a new-found positivity in the workplace and staff have grown in confidence
- Individuals are now more willing to volunteer to take on extra responsibilities such as setting up breastfeeding groups and earning additional qualifications
- The programme has proved so successful it will be rolled out to a total of 275 health visitors, nursery nurses, support workers, admin staff and community nurses working in the five to 19 service

3.3.3 "Sustain STEPS® is helping us support clients to rise up from that hole in the ground"

A health visiting team which delivers services to vulnerable families in Essex has heralded Sustain STEPS® to Excellence for equipping them with the tools they need to successfully manage change while instilling a new-found positivity in the workplace.

Managers and clinicians from Provide CIC say the course has encouraged them take a different approach with clients and colleagues while also helping them prepare to transfer to public health in October.

In addition, the programme has received such "fantastic feedback" from health visitors that the organisation is now rolling it out more widely so that staff in their five to 19 service can also benefit from the tools it offers and buy into a new shared ethos within the team.



“The NHS is constantly changing and a big part of how successful that change is depends on how people view it,” said Carrie MacGregor, Assistant Director for Children’s Public Health Services with Provide.

“The Call to Action was a huge piece of modernisation work and involved a fair amount of training. Some staff say that change was enforced – but Sustain STEPS® helped them appreciate it was necessary and they could choose to accept it.

“Initially we were considering offering the course just to our health visitors, but we got such fantastic feedback that we decided to invest over and above and deliver it to the whole workforce so that everyone was working to the same principles. The model we use across these services also ties in closely with the ethos of Sustain STEPS® as it is all about goal-setting, looking at what families want to achieve, giving them aspirations for their children and helping in a positive way.

“By the time we have rolled the course out fully, we will have trained around 275 health visitors, nursery nurses, support workers, admin staff and community nurses. Everybody is part of the team and everybody has an equal responsibility in making our services and processes work, which is why we felt offering the course to all of our staff was so vital.”

Jane Hentley, Executive Clinical and Operations Director, said she had been “really impressed” with the impact the programme has had on the organisation since it began delivering Sustain STEPS® in July 2014.

“It is clear from talking to many of the staff who have been on the Sustain course that it has made a difference to their approach, not only to work but also to their personal life,” she said. “In particular, it has enabled them to gain insight into their own behaviours and given them a renewed sense of confidence in their abilities. This had had an impact on the outcomes for patients, children, and families and I am really impressed with the overall impact on the services.



“We made the decision to invest in this programme for children’s public health services, and the result of this has led to behavioural change which has been positive for both the staff and the people that access our services. Therefore it has proven to be good value for money.”

Hannah Van der Puije, 0 – 19 Children’s Locality Manager, said she has seen staff grow in confidence, embrace change more readily and volunteer for more responsibilities since the roll out of Sustain STEPS®. She also feels the course will play a key role in helping staff successfully respond to future challenges.

“Staff tell me they using the techniques they have learnt with clients to turn negatives into

positives and help them develop aspirations so they can get out of the hole in the ground,” said Hannah. “By using positive affirmations, we supporting those people and helping them rise up from that hole.

“We have also used the programme to focus on new ways of working, which will help when we move to the local authority in October. We will hone in on not becoming complacent and managing change by working creatively, coming out of our comfort zones and challenging ourselves in new ways. That is the only way we will continue to improve.”

For Health Visitor Sharon Boatswain, who is based at Witham Health Centre, the impact of the course has been significant. Since completing Sustain STEPS® in January, she has set up a breastfeeding group, is using the techniques directly with families in her care and feels more positive about the future.

“I really enjoyed the course and would recommend it to anybody,” she said. “The work around comfort zones, goal-setting and beliefs had a big impact on me, and the course also helped to change the way I see things.

“I don’t like talking in front of people so would have tried to put off starting the breastfeeding group previously, but the work we did around stretching our comfort zones really helped and it wasn’t anywhere near as bad as I thought it would be. I’m even thinking about starting other groups in the future – Sustain STEPS® gave me the extra motivation I needed and now I think more positively and considering what I will get from it as well as how it will benefit the mums I work with.

“I am also using the techniques to instil self-belief in some of my mums, who can be quite negative and down. This is helping them to take little steps and prove to themselves they can do things. I have found that setting manageable goals, such as getting to a class or going out for a walk, is really useful as once they have achieved it they are then motivated to move onto the next thing.”

Fellow Health Visitor Karen Walker has also used Sustain STEPS® to help families break down bigger issues into manageable chunks. In addition, she encourages clients to visualise where they see themselves in the future before exploring the steps they need to take to get there.

The course has also proved useful in her personal life, bringing benefits to her own family.

“I really enjoyed the course, which was much more relaxed and less threatening than others I have done,” said Karen. “I bored my family with it at home after I’d first done it, encouraging them to be more positive and think about things differently. My husband is doing a course at the moment so I’ve been working with him on building confidence and believing he can do it, which has helped.





“From a personal perspective, I feel I am more positive about things and look at the glass as being half full rather than half empty. The families I work with have picked up on this, and seem happier to talk about how they approach things, why things go well and what they could do to influence those elements which aren’t as successful.”

This new-found willingness to change and develop has been reflected across the entire team, with more people volunteering for extra responsibilities or exploring the possibility of earning additional qualifications since completing the course.

“For us, Sustain STEPS® is about valuing our staff, helping people cope with change and enabling them to stretch themselves out of that comfort zone so they can think about working in a different way,” added Carrie. “It has helped to set that seed and encourage people to revisit their own strengths and look at whether they are where they want to be, or if they need to make a decision to change.

“Everyone really enjoyed the course. The fact they can use the tools in their own lives and with their own families as well as their worklife has also helped them feel valued and as if the organisation has committed to them.

“I would certainly recommend it. I firmly believe that if people are happy and more positive, they are better employees and – most importantly – will be in a position to provide better services for the families we work with.”

As a Sustain STEPS® facilitator, Hannah has witnessed first-hand the impact the course has had – with even cynical staff members changing their views on the programme almost immediately.

“In the end those staff thanked me, apologised and appreciated the fact they had been given the chance to complete the training,” she said. “They realised just how good Sustain STEPS® was right from the beginning, and were enthusiastic as they realised it was for them and could be used in work and any other environment.

“As a facilitator, I see the delegates growing in confidence as they complete the course. Afterwards it’s about encouraging them to put the things they have learnt into practice so that they can overcome any fears they may have and build on that new-found confidence.

“Sustain STEPS® also helps people realise that making mistakes isn’t the end of the world. What is more important is how we rise up, learn from those mistake, look at things differently and create new goals.

“The concept behind the programme – that motivation is an inside job and no one can do it for you – is very important. We have seen that in action with our staff – when one person starts doing something for themselves, it catches and inspires the next person. This shows the programme is becoming embedded across the organisation and I think we will continue to see more benefits as time goes on.”

3.4 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT)

3.4.1 Background

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) provides mental health, learning disability, social care and community services for adults and older people, as well as children's community services in Peterborough.

Serving 891,000 residents, it employs more than 3,400 staff working at 50 different locations. Its health visiting service cares for families with children up to the age of five and runs drop-in clinics, help with breastfeeding and offers a range of other support.

CPFT has held nine Sustain STEPS® courses since launching the programme in June 2014, reaching 85 delegates.

3.4.2 Key findings:

- Staff have been empowered to take on more responsibilities and embrace leadership and are now more willing to volunteer for new roles such as mentoring students or apply for team manager posts
- Morale has improved and sickness levels have dropped, while managers have noted increased enthusiasm and confidence within their teams
- Staff used the techniques to benefit clients and have helped:
 - antenatal women overcome their fear of giving birth
 - parents set goals to improve emotional wellbeing within their family
 - mothers find their own solutions to problems
- Outside of work, individuals have used the programme to help motivate them to lose weight, rejoin the gym, start running and improve relationships within their own families
- The programme has proved so successful that it has now been rolled out to CPFT's 17-strong team of school nurses

3.4.3 "There has been a real change in people's attitudes and a new-found belief in their abilities"

Members of a busy health visiting team working across Cambridgeshire have credited the acclaimed Sustain STEPS® to Excellence course as empowering them to take on more responsibilities while improving services for the vulnerable families in their care.

Staff at Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) say the course has





boosted enthusiasm, increased confidence and helped them to embrace leadership by encouraging them to volunteer for additional responsibilities or new roles. In addition, morale and motivation have been given a lift while sickness levels have dropped.

The change comes after all 80 members of the CPFT team – including health visitors, nursery nurses, a PA, admin and business support – completed the course, which is designed to ensure they are well placed to respond to the challenges of the national ‘Call to Action’.

“Sustain STEPS® has brought real benefits for our organisation,” said Angela Rees, Service Manager for

Universal Services. “I’ve seen a massive step up in health visitors coming forward to do things. Previously requests were met with a stony silence, but now we get numerous volunteers offering help – which coincides with people completing their training.

“The ‘train the trainer’ element was particularly appealing as it has given us the opportunity to develop our own staff while giving them the skills to deliver the course in-house rather than going out to an external provider. It’s a good return on the investment we have made.”

Health Visiting Team Manager Val Carradice also applauded the train the trainer element of the programme, saying it gave CPFT the chance to give something back to staff who had worked so hard to deliver the Call to Action.

“Three years ago we were very short of staff and morale was low,” she said. “The Call to Action also put staff under extra pressure as they were tasked with supporting large numbers of students coming through the system. Sustain STEPS® was a way of investing in those staff who had worked so hard and making sure they felt valued, which then had a knock on effect on improving morale.

“As well as helping us to keep down costs, the facilitator programme has given staff the opportunity to develop new skills and push themselves to try something different. As health visitors themselves, they know what issues the delegates are facing which makes their delivery of the course more meaningful. Sustain have also been very supportive and easy to work with throughout, while all of the resources they provide are really good.”

Health Visitor Bekkie Cochrane applied for the role of facilitator after completing the initial three-day course – something she doesn’t think she would have had the confidence to pursue had it not been for Sustain STEPS®.

She said: "I absolutely loved the course. I had always thought I'd like to teach but didn't have the confidence to stand up in front of people. I don't think I would have applied for the facilitators' role had I not have completed the course first. I've now run two of my own courses and some other teaching too and firmly believe that Sustain STEPS® helped me prove to myself that I actually can do it.

"I would love to facilitate full time as I get so much from it. The subject fits so well with me – I get it, I know it works and think I am able to put that across to others. I've also noticed a difference in myself as I'm much more confident and have achieved all of the goals which I set when I first started the course."

As well as benefitting the service, staff have been using the techniques they have learnt when working with their clients. Examples include:

- using visualisation techniques to help antenatal mums who had a traumatic first birth overcome their fears as they prepare for their second delivery
- empowering families with entrenched difficulties to look at what they could do differently in a positive light
- changing the approach health visitors have to their families and giving them the confidence to encourage clients to carefully consider their options themselves
- empowering health visitors to be positive and work with parents' strengths rather than focussing on trying to correct any shortcomings

Clare Dhanushan, a Health Visitor based at Thistle Moor Medical Centre, said the programme had played a significant role in her post-natal work with families.

"I pick out particular themes, such as remaining goal-orientated and focusing on positives, and concentrate on them," she said. "We talk about what is going right within a family and give them ownership of the goals they have set so that they can take small steps towards them and improve their emotional wellbeing. This can be something as simple as spending more time with their toddler, going to a children's centre or doing nice things together as a family."

Fellow Health Visitor Tania Boreham has found the course particularly useful in helping families to break out of a negative cycle.

"A lot of the people we work with have got lots of complicated issues," she said. "For example, the parents may have low self-esteem, don't believe in themselves and find change difficult to effect. Sustain STEPS® has helped me talk to them in a different way. It's given me the ability to reflect the discussion back to them so that they can look at what they want to achieve rather than them expecting me to have all the answers.



“I now have the confidence to ask how things make them feel and park issues which have been and gone so that they can move forwards, be positive and find their own solutions.”

As well as helping their clients strive for new goals, health visitors working for CPFT say Sustain STEPS® has helped them as individuals to do things they never thought possible. Bekkie gave her health and fitness a boost, Clare rejoined the gym after a decade-long absence and Tania used the techniques with her teenage son.

“I set three goals – to do more public speaking and teaching, lose weight and get fitter – and I’ve achieved them all,” explained Bekkie. “I’d started running a few weeks before doing the course and had been telling myself I couldn’t do it. But I can now run 5km in 28 minutes and have lost three stone. Sustain STEPS® definitely helped me keep the momentum up and reach those goals.

“At work, more people are volunteering for things as they believe they can do it. People are analysing why they think they can’t do something in the first place and then turning that into a positive.”

After witnessing the benefits the course had on their health visiting staff, CPFT managers took the decision to roll out Sustain STEPS® further to benefit its 17 school nurses.

“Our school nurses work with families as they get older, so it made sense to me to for them to complete the course too, gain the same benefits and be able to take the impact of Sustain STEPS® further,” added Angela.



“There has been a real change in people’s attitudes and new-found belief in their own abilities, They have pushed themselves forwards to play a greater role, with some now mentoring students and others signing up for leadership courses or applying for new team manager posts.

“Staff are more motivated at their one-to-ones and are actively exploring how they can develop or support themselves and the service by accessing further learning. Some have used it to map their career and look at where they want to go – it has helped them to focus on what they want in the future and take action to help them achieve those goals.

“It has helped uncover skills they didn’t know they had as well as taking steps to improve their own circumstances. One of our facilitators, for example, now wants to go into teaching as she has discovered she enjoys it so much. Another was living in a situation which didn’t work for her, but was galvanised into moving house the week after completing the course.

“Overall, the outcomes from this project have been really positive, and I hope we can continue to harness that enthusiasm going forward. Sustain STEPS® has made a big difference to our workforce and has changed the service for the better. It has been well worth it and we are confident it will continue to bring value in the long term.”

Health visitors working on the front line have echoed her views, heralding the course as not only effective but also enjoyable.

“It was fabulous and delivered really well,” said Health Visitor Janice Toyne. “I really enjoyed everything about it – it gave us time away from the office, made us think and helped us get to know each other. It was really good for team building and a lot of fun. I would 100% recommend it. It was nice to be given the opportunity to do something out of work and feel valued for doing it.”

“We all came back from the training and made changes. It has given us more self-belief and the confidence that we can do things. It is also helping us to push our own comfort zones and those of our clients by having those difficult conversations we may otherwise have tried to avoid.”

Initially cynical, Tania changed her view as soon as the course began, saying: “I really enjoyed it and found it enlightening. I could see from the exercises we were doing that the material would fit everyday life and it made sense straight away.”

“Everyone came back with a proactive, positive attitude and it was absolutely great to get protected time to do something which you felt was primarily for your benefit. Although it absolutely applied to the workplace, it felt like an investment in me, which I really appreciated.”

Clare echoed her views, adding: “It made me feel valued as an employee, which in turn incentivised me to be more motivated while giving me additional respect for the organisation. As a team we are achieving more than we were a few years ago, and that’s linked to the positivity we built during the course. I really enjoyed it and would thoroughly recommend it, and not just to health services.”

“Sustain STEPS® was just so different. Initially I was worrying about taking three days out of work as I had so much to do, but within an hour I realised it the course was like nothing I had ever done before.”

“It felt like it was a present for us rather than just another training course to benefit the service, which was really nice and much appreciated.”

3.5 Anglian Community Enterprise (ACE)

3.1.1 Background

Anglian Community Enterprise (ACE) provides NHS community healthcare services in north east Essex and a variety of specialist services across the rest of the county.

A community interest company, it employs more than 1,150 staff and delivers more than 40 services, including community nursing, diabetes, drug and alcohol advice, health improvement and breastfeeding.

ACE has held six Sustain STEPS® to Excellence courses to date, training 52 staff.

3.1.2 Key findings:

- The programme has helped clinicians work more effectively with depressed parents, build self-belief within families and explore issues so that families can take control and work through problems themselves
- Team relationships have been strengthened and the atmosphere within the workplace is calmer and more positive
- Communication has improved and staff are more appreciative of each other's skills
- Staff are using the tools they learnt with their teenage children, re-examine their own work-life balance and find more effective ways of managing stress

3.1.3 “I can't explain how it made me feel and what a positive impact it had on me”

Health visitors working across north east Essex have described the “huge impact” which Sustain STEPS® to Excellence has had on the confidence and proactivity of their teams while praising the positive knock-on effect of the course on families in their care.

Clinicians from Anglia Community Enterprise CIC (ACE) have credited the programme with helping them work more effectively with depressed parents and building self-belief within families before encouraging them to take small steps to change their lives for the better.

The group say Sustain STEPS® has also been the catalyst for major changes within both their work and home lives. From strengthening team relationships and promoting positivity in the workplace to helping individuals cope with traumatic bereavements outside of the office, the programme has proved enormously valuable in a range of different professional and personal scenarios.



"I regularly work with vulnerable families and often use concepts from the course with them to help them build strength and step outside of their comfort zones so that they can deal with the issues they are facing," said Nikki Peterson, a Health Visitor and Clinical Practice Tutor.

"The way I deliver things and communicate with others has also changed, particularly in my role as a mentor, preceptor and clinical practice tutor. I have a better understanding of how the conscious mind and sub conscious works and am more aware of things.

"Whereas previously I might have been frustrated if someone couldn't understand a concept or the impact it could have on them, I now appreciate how long it takes to work through issues and use the principles from Sustain STEPS® to help people look at their life more clearly."

Celena Saddington, Lead for Health Visiting, said around 125 staff would receive the training by the time ACE has completed its Sustain STEPS® programme, including all health visitors, health visiting managers and nursery nurses.

Feedback has been so positive that she is now hoping to secure funding to roll out the training across the organisation.

"Everybody who has done it has been really positive and it has definitely helped the team to rise to the challenges they were facing," said Celena. "They seem happier, and are able to manage stress more effectively. People are also embracing responsibility more readily.

"The impact on our facilitators has been phenomenal – it has brought them on leaps and bounds and they have all really enjoyed it. They are now using their increased confidence in other areas, with some going on to take on managerial roles – they are completely different people.



"Sustain STEPS® is a robust model which has clearly been very well researched. I am now trying to secure funding to roll the training out across the organisation as the principles could be easily transferable and could benefit other disciplines."

Clacton Health Visitor Jane Milner says the course has encouraged her to spend more time to explore issues with families, helping them take control and work through problems themselves.

"Sustain STEPS® helps you to think more about the way parents may look at things and what might have happened before which makes them think in a certain way," she said. "I now try and explore more with them so I can help them find their own solutions to issues rather than expecting me to give them the answers.

"This is vital because sometimes we think we can see exactly what they need, but when you

drill down you might find the thing that makes a difference for them is not what you were expecting. STEPS® has really helped with that.”

Sue Pinner, also based in Clacton, found the “interactive, enjoyable course” incredibly useful when helping both new mothers and fathers to overcome depression.

She explained: “I revisit the themes from the course regularly with some of my families and it really helps them to think about how to change their lives. I try and instil into my clients that thinking differently and having a positive attitude can improve your outcomes and the way your life will turn out.

“I work in a deprived area where there are lots of child protection issues and vulnerable families. I’ve become more confident at addressing problems in the home and will pick up those concerns at the time and speak to the family, even though it will be hard and I know they will not like what I’m going to say.”

The impact which the course has had in the office as well as clients’ homes has also been significant. From boosting confidence and enabling people to take on more responsibilities to gaining a greater understand of colleague’s strengths, the effects have been far-reaching.

“Everyone who has done the course is more positive and confident and seem calmer in their approach,” said Jane. “They don’t get as stressed about things and take that time to step back and think.

“We can be so reactionary when we are firefighting, but in reality we are not achieving anything at all. Taking the time to stop and look at an issue from a different perspective before breaking it down into small bits helps greatly and makes a situation much easier to manage.”

Nikki, who is based in Colchester and completed the Sustain STEPS® facilitator course just a week after taking the three-day course, echoed her views, saying: “The team building aspect was really good. You are more open and able to communicate and appreciate each other’s skills and areas where perhaps you are not so skilled.

“It makes you look at yourself and think about the way you are with people and your attitude. Instead of getting down and frustrated with the system, pressures of work and constant change, STEPS® encourages you to think differently and give things a positive spin.

“Feedback we’ve had from colleagues who have done the course has been really positive. Those who were feeling wobbly for personal or professional reasons have found it particularly helpful, while it has made people a bit more prepared to step outside of their comfort zone. It has certainly helped me to gently push colleagues to try something different and take on a slightly different role or more challenging client, which is great for individual development.”



Fellow Health Visitor Leander Bull, who has worked in nursing for 18 years, credits the course with instilling a new 'can-do' attitude in her team.

"I loved every minute of Sustain STEPS® and liked the fact it wasn't just based around work and felt like it was for us," she said. "It has made a difference by helping our team be more positive, which in turn has impacted our confidence levels and proactivity. I am setting more goals in my personal life and not blaming everyone else for things but taking steps to change them for myself."

The impact of Sustain STEPS® has also had a positive effect on the personal lives of other health visitors at ACE, encouraging them to set their own goals and redress their work-life balance. Many are also using the techniques they have learnt to benefit members of their family.

"I've used the tools with my teenage children, telling them to revisit positive experiences to give them the confidence to deal with tricky situations," said Nikki. "I've also drawn on STEPS® to encourage them to appreciate life more, build resilience and emotional intelligence and support them to be more positive during the challenges of exam stress and relationship issues.

"The course also helped me look at alternative ways of managing stress. I suffered two traumatic bereavements in difficult circumstances just before the course, and it helped me take responsibility for my own wellbeing. I now do yoga and practice mindfulness and am more relaxed. STEPS® made me look at myself and what makes me happy rather than expecting other people to do it for me.



"I'm now a facilitator and get more from the course each time I do it. I really enjoy it, am enthusiastic about delivering it and get a real buzz from it."

Jane has also used Sustain STEPS® in her family life, helping her nine-year-old daughter to overcome issues at school by talking openly about what has gone well during the day and what has worried her so that she can find solutions to any problems she may face.

She said: "Sustain STEPS® made me think about parenting and what kind of messages I was giving and has helped me break the cycle of my daughter saying she couldn't do things.

"Every night before she goes to sleep, we talk about her day and look forward to something good which will happen tomorrow. Focusing on the positives, breaking things down into bite-sized pieces and celebrating small success is really helping and has made her more confident.

"The course has also helped me to expand my comfort zones and set goals. I am now fulfilling a 'looked after' children role, which is something I wouldn't have done before as I would have

told myself I wouldn't be very good at it. STEPS® helped me think about what I would get from it and the skills it would help me develop, prompting me to take control and go for it. The course helped me realise I do have an influence over things, and don't need to be pulled along by the tide."

And for Sue, the course came at the ideal time by helping her cope with the loss of her mother.

"Losing my mum was awful and I wasn't in a brilliant place when I did the course," she said. "But I absolutely loved it and it helped me through a really difficult time.

"I can't explain enough how it made me feel and what a positive impact it had on me. I thought it was brilliant – the best course I've ever been on."



4. More information

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