

Job Description

Management Grouping: Children's Services
Team: Family Support & Child Protection
Job Title: Senior Practitioner

Purpose of this Job

This is a position for an experienced practitioner with at least 3 years' post qualifying experience as a social worker. You will have responsibility for managing a caseload of more complex and higher need cases within a child protection context. You will be required to take appropriate initiative when working to support children and their families. You will also support other practitioners in the team through mentoring, advice, support, and occasional shadowing on visits or for meetings. There is a high likelihood of court involved work in this role.

In the role you will build positive, supportive, and respectful relationships with families in order to help support children in need of help or protection. Where possible, you will help support families to raise their children safely within their family network by supporting and augmenting their support network. Where this is not possible, alternate plans will need to be explored and implemented to help ensure children grow up in safe, nurturing, and happy homes that achieve long term permanence. This will require working in a supported practice environment that respectfully challenges and enables you to use your professional judgement, autonomy, experience, knowledge, and skills. These all form the key aspects of our Signs of Safety practice model which we use when working with children, families and the wider professional network. You will have a proficient ability to communicate in English and be able to influence others in an effort to help coordinate services and supports in the best way possible to keep children as safe and well cared for as possible.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

To have experience or a willingness to be trained in and use the Signs of Safety practice model we use when working with children and families.

To work in a respectful and professional manner with children and families that is focused on achieving what is in the best interest of the child.

Consistently use the Signs of Safety practice model when assessing risks or worries, what is working well, and exploring the next steps to improve the outcomes and safety of the children and young people we serve.

To undertake regular visits to and work creatively with children and young people in order to develop a good rapport that allows you to obtain the child's wishes and feelings and to make sure these inform the work that you do.

To work with children and families in a variety of diverse and complex contexts, such as mental ill health, disability, substance misuse, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation, poverty, discrimination, and immigration.

To be able to apply relevant social work theories and research in a way that helps best understand the lived experiences of children and young people, such as child development, attachment theory, impact of childhood trauma, and the cycle of grooming and sexual abuse.

To explore contingency plans that utilise the family's support network as much as possible, even when exploring other caring arrangements for children.

To recognise the importance of working within existing laws, statutory guidance, and local safeguarding policies and procedures that govern the work we do.

To be responsible for and manage children's cases in the respective team or service area they are placed (ie: children looked after, referral and assessment, etc) in a more autonomous way.

To coordinate and implement plans that are based on updated assessments and address areas of unmet safety and welfare needs for children.

To represent the local authority in a professional and competent matter, especially when making representations at court, with families, or with other agencies.

To work within the Council's policies, procedures, values, and code of conduct at all times and to reflect these when carrying out professional responsibilities with members of the public.

To regularly review the progress and implementation of children's plans and update these based on new assessments or significant changes in the child or family's circumstances.

To work in partnership with the family network and the wider professional network in order to provide the best level of support and care for the children and young people you are working with.

To carry out and regularly update assessments of a child's needs that involve relevant family members and professionals in order to ensure these are holistic and can identify areas of strength and unmet need or concern.

To lead or cooperate with any child protection enquiries that are carried out in order to identify any risks or concerns for a child's safety or wellbeing.

To work in a non-discriminatory way through recognising and appreciating the differences of others and raising ones awareness through new learning or networking opportunities with organisations that help raise awareness of such issues.

To participate in regular supervision with your line manager to review case developments and critically reflect on the work being undertaken.

To be receptive to hearing challenge that may arise from audits, supervision or feedback from families, professionals, or managers in order to reflect on one's practice and identify areas for improvement.

Respectfully engages with children and families in a way that seeks their input and involvement in planning for children and young people, utilising their existing support networks and coordinating additional support where needed.

To follow and implement the decisions and directions given by managers or decision making panels.

Where there are areas of professional or management disagreement, to utilise established escalation procedures in order for decisions to have further consideration and seek agreement on the best way forward.

To help identify and to contribute to any areas of service improvement and delivery.

To hold a caseload of more complex and sensitive cases and deal with them effectively and efficiently to ensure those children at risk of harm are protected where necessary.

To chair meetings such as core groups, child in need reviews, and care planning reviews to ensure care and support plans are in the best interest of the child's safety and wellbeing.

To make recommendations to the manager about the need for legal planning or action to safeguard a child.

To provide interim cover in the absence of the assistant or team managers, as required.

Any other duties reasonably requested by the manager related to fulfilling the council's corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities to children and the smooth running of the support service provided by the team.

Learning and Development

To regularly review and reflect on professional practice along with colleagues and your line manager to identify areas of further professional learning and development.

To enrol and engage in regular training and learning opportunities, both internally and externally, in order to promote further professional development and practice.

To identify and engage in opportunities to share professional practice and experience with other colleagues, students and professionals to promote an ongoing learning environment.

To help identify and support any learning and development needs for workers in the team.

Professional Capability Framework (PCF) Expectations for Experienced Social Workers

Experienced social workers are more autonomous in their role. They demonstrate expert and effective practice in complex situations, assessing and managing higher levels of risk, striking a balance between support and control, liaising with a wide range of professionals, including more senior levels. They manage complex caseloads, and offer expert opinion within the organisation and to others. They chair a range of meetings, offer expert support to case conferences, and produce high quality assessments and reports for a range of functions. They model good practice, setting expectations for others. They start to take responsibility and be accountable for the practice of others, mentoring newly qualified social workers, and supervising the work of junior staff. They undertake capacity-building with individuals, families, communities, user groups and voluntary organisations, and contribute their views on service provision to commissioners.

Person Specification

All applicants will be assessed against the following criteria and performance indicators throughout the recruitment process.

E = Essential

D = Desirable A = Application

I = Interview

T = Test

Selection Criteria	Council Value	Level of Need	How Assessed
<p>Candidates should be able to demonstrate competent experience and capabilities in the following areas:</p> <p><u>Relationships and Effective Direct Work</u></p> <p>At least 2 years post qualifying experience working collaboratively, cooperatively, and respectfully with multi-agency partners and families, especially within diverse communities.</p> <p>Experience using creative means of engaging children and families according to their age, level of cognitive development, and their ability to communicate and understand (ie: words and pictures, games or activities, using interpreters).</p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p>Extensive experience writing complex and sensitive reports, case notes, and court statements.</p> <p>Experience and confident ability to manage your own cases and workload in an organised and more autonomous manner.</p> <p>Have a proficient ability to speak, write, and read in English, with confidence and accuracy, whilst using the right kind of vocabulary appropriate to a given situation without a great deal of hesitation.</p> <p>Ability to listen to our children and families, understand their needs, and respond clearly even in complex situations.</p> <p><u>Child Development</u></p> <p>Extensive knowledge and experience of child development and what are typical age related physical, cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural expectations for children and young people and how health, environmental, or genetic factors can influence them.</p>	<p>Collaboration, Open & Accessible</p> <p>Collaboration, Open & Accessible</p> <p>Listen & Respond</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>Listen & Respond</p> <p>Listen & Respond</p> <p>Impact</p>	<p>E</p> <p>E</p> <p>E</p> <p>E</p> <p>E</p> <p>E</p> <p>E</p>	<p>AI</p> <p>AI</p> <p>AIT</p> <p>AIT</p> <p>AIT</p> <p>AIT</p> <p>AI</p>

Selection Criteria	Council Value	Level of Need	How Assessed
<p>Possess a more comprehensive understanding of theories and research relating to child development, including attachment theory and resilience in children.</p> <p><u>Adult Mental Ill Health, Substance Misuse Domestic Abuse, Physical Ill Health & Disability</u></p>	Listen & Respond, Impact	E	AIT
<p>Extensive experience working with and understanding the impact of adult mental ill health, substance misuse, domestic abuse and physical ill health or disability can impact a parent's capacity to care for their child. Comprehensive understanding of more complex issues therein, such as the cycle of power and control in domestic abuse.</p>	Listen & Respond, Impact, Open & Accessible	E	AIT
<p>Demonstrated ability to help identify and coordinate support from professionals and within the family network that help parents facing these issues, and for young carers helping to support them.</p> <p><u>Abuse and Neglect of Children</u></p>	Listen & Respond, Collaboration, Leadership, Impact	E	AIT
<p>At least 2years post qualifying experience working in a statutory child protection role (ie: child in need, child protection, children with disabilities, children looked after).</p>	Innovation, Leadership, Impact	E	AIT
<p>A good breadth of experience working with and supporting children and young people who have experienced physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect.</p> <p><u>Child and Family Assessment</u></p>	Innovation, Leadership, Impact	E	AIT
<p>Extensive experience undertaking holistic assessments of children and their families using the assessment framework (triangle) for children in need.</p>	Innovation, Collaboration	E	I
<p>Experience carrying out human rights assessments, especially when working with families who have no settled immigration status or are seeking asylum.</p>	Innovation, Impact	D	I
<p>Proficient experience undertaking assessments of significant risk factors that are posed to children or yourself, and developing safety plans to reduce those risks.</p>	Innovation, Leadership, Impact	E	AIT

Selection Criteria	Council Value	Level of Need	How Assessed
<u>Analysis, Decision Making, Planning & Review</u>			
Extensive experience with formulating a professional analysis from holistic assessments and making clear plans with involved family members and professionals to help improve the safety and wellbeing of children.	Leadership, Collaboration, Listen & Respond	E	AI
Experience using a Signs of Safety approach to using a strengths bases analysis that takes account of both strengths, signs of safety, and areas of risk and concern for children.	Listen & Respond, Open & Accessible	D	I
Experience using a solution focused approach to making plans that are clear to children and families and focus on a positive outcome for the child and not just the absence of the problem.	Open & Accessible, Impact	E	AIT
Understanding of when to take appropriate initiative in managing cases and when to seek management approval.	Innovation, Leadership	D	I
Experience supporting assistant and team managers with the effective running of the team, including attending and chairing meetings and mentoring other practitioners in the team.	Innovation, Leadership	D	AI
<u>The Law & the Family & Youth Justice Systems</u>			
Proficient working knowledge of the Children Act 1989, Working Together and related statutory guidance governing child protection procedures.	Leadership, Impact	E	AI
Takes initiative to research and explore relevant local policies or guidance related to working with children and families in a variety of contexts (ie: female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, unaccompanied minors and asylum seeking children).	Innovation, Leadership, Impact	E	I
A good breadth of experience attending and testifying in court proceedings, preparing statements, and seeking legal orders to safeguard children.	Leadership, Impact	E	AI
Understand the importance of keeping information confidential, securely stored, used and communicated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.	Leadership, Impact	E	AI

Selection Criteria	Council Value	Level of Need	How Assessed
<u>The Role of Supervision</u>			
Experience of being jointly responsible, with the line manager, for participating in and arranging regular supervision to update on case work, review progress on children's plans, agree decisions, and critically reflect on practice.	Leadership, Listen & Respond, Impact	E	AIT
Demonstrates the ability to be jointly responsible, with the line manager, for recognising learning development needs and identifying training or learning opportunities to enhance professional knowledge and skills.	Leadership, Open & Accessible, Impact	E	AI
Comes prepared for supervision with issues to discuss, updates on case progression, progress on agreed actions, and any other issues you wish to discuss related to practice.	Leadership, Impact	E	I
<u>Organisational Context</u>			
Possess a relevant social work qualification (ie: DipSW or CQSW or degree in social work).	Leadership	E	AI
Are registered with the professional regulator for social work (Social Work England).	Leadership	E	AI
Have a good understanding of and ability to use IT systems, such as case recording systems (ie: Liquid Logic), word processing (ie: Microsoft Word), Email and Calendars (ie: Microsoft Outlook), Internet search engines (ie: Google or Bing), computers, mobile phones, and secure remote working systems (ie: Wifi, Citrix or Cisco VPN systems).	Innovation, Impact	E	AIT

This position is exempt from the main provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means the Act permits the disclosure of any "spent" or "unspent" convictions, cautions or reprimands that are not "protected" as defined under the Exceptions Order 1975 (2013). This is due to this position is working with vulnerable children and adults and is thus deemed a "regulated activity" as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. This means checks will also be made against barring lists related to working with vulnerable children and adults.

We recognise the contribution that ex-offenders can make as employees and volunteers and welcome applications from them. A person's criminal record will not, in itself, prohibit that person from being appointed to this post. Any information given will be treated in the strictest confidence. Suitable applicants will not be refused posts because of offences which are not relevant to, and do not place them at or make them a risk in, the role for which they are applying.

All cases will be examined on an individual basis and will take the following into consideration:

- Whether the conviction is relevant to the position applied for.

- The seriousness of any offence revealed.
- The age of the applicant at the time of the offence(s).
- The length of time since the offence(s) occurred.
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour.
- The circumstances surrounding the offence(s), and the explanation(s) offered by the person concerned.
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour.

We will not undertake a DBS check unless an offer of employment is made. It is important that applicants understand that failure to disclose any convictions, cautions, reprimands or final warnings that are not “protected” could result in withdrawing an employment offer, or later disciplinary proceedings or dismissal. For further information on which disclosures are considered “protected” and thus may be “filtered” from a disclosure, please visit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-filtering-guidance/dbs-filtering-guide>