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| **Job Description** |
| **Post title** | Participation and Engagement Officer |
| **JE Reference No** | N10301 |
| **Grade** | Grade 9 |
| **Service** | Children & Young Peoples Services |
| **Service Area** | Children’s Social Care – Safeguarding & Professional Practice |
| **Reporting to** | The post holder will be accountable to the Professional Practice Manager.  |
| **Location** | Your normal place of work will be County Hall, Durham, but you may be required to work at any Council workplace within County Durham. |
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| **DBS** | This post is subject to an enhanced disclosure with barred list checks |
| **Flexitime** | This post is eligible for flexitime. |
| **Politically restricted** | This post is not designated as a politically restricted post in accordance with the requirements of Section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and by regulations made from time to time by the Secretary of State. |

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| **Description of role** |

The Postholder will be required to work with practitioners and managers across all of Children’s Social Care to ensure the voice of children and young people is clearly heard and informs the day to day practice of social workers and contributes to service improvement and development work. The Postholder will be required to work with staff across the service to improve the rates of participation and engagement which secures the voice of children and young people and ensure actions taken have meaningful impact on outcomes.

Specifically the postholder will:-

* Develop and deliver a “Participation and Engagement Plan” with clear outcomes, which will provide safe, creative and inclusive methods that will support the participation and engagement of children and young people and which will deliver work which has impact on securing good outcomes for them across Children’s Social Care (CSC) Service.
* Identify best practice and innovation in the participation and engagement of children and young people regionally and nationally and embed into practice within Durham.
* Lead on initiatives and projects which enable children and young people to express their views on CSC services and decisions which affect them, from high level strategic decisions, through to individual decisions.
* Work collaboratively with colleagues across the Council to embed participation and engagement principles, raise the profile of the work and extend opportunities for colleagues to support participation and engagement.
* Demonstrate an inclusive approach, ensuring that the participation offer engages children and young people from a range of backgrounds, and with a range of experiences and needs. Work with children from vulnerable groups showing sensitivity in promoting safety and well-being for all.
* To contribute to the effective implementation of service development and working practices to achieve the Council’s priorities.

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| **Duties and responsibilities** |

**Promoting children and young people’s participation and engagement:**

* Work in close collaboration with Investing in Children (IIC) providing additionality to their work within the service and ensure practice embraces the IIC principles and supports ongoing IIC Status across all the teams.
* Put in place approaches designed to engage children and young people involved with the CSC Service, and support their involvement at all levels of service planning and service delivery.
* Design and deliver creative approaches for engagement with children and young people, a wide range of staff, Managers, Leaders and Members, to support increased engagement and influence.
* Promote recognition and celebration of the achievements of children and young people involved in CSC Service through the development of schemes and events.
* Promote the Rights of the Child and a rights based approach.
* Secure and maintain Investing in Children Status across individual teams that make up the CSC Service.
* Assist young people to present at conferences/workshops/training events;

**Ensure the voice of children and young people is clearly sought and used to influence decision making and plans about their lives:**

* Develop practitioners across the service so that they have the skills and expertise to actively engage children and young people in assessment, planning and interventions so that their wishes and views are clearly represented in all casework;
* Develop a ‘young inspectors’ programme so that children and young people are routinely and directly involved in giving feedback to the service about the quality of the support they receive.
* Lead consultation and engagement exercises including co-design with children and young people, with a focus on the difference that engagement can make.
* Collate and analyse feedback to provide a summary of views. Feedback outcomes to children and young people through forums and/or social media channels.

**Facilitate the participation of children and young people in governance arrangements:**

* Work in partnership with the Children in Care Council to ensure the views, wishes and experiences of children in care are heard and responded to and that they inform service development.
* Develop and support tailored work with a range of vulnerable groups of children and young people involved with CSC, including the establishment of forums where required.
* Ensure that forums establish and maintain positive relationships with key Council Members.
* Responsible for planning events and activities offering positive opportunities and which are safe (including risk assessment).

**Support the development of Participation and Engagement capacity across the service:**

* Work flexibly to support all areas of participation activity, this may include: helping to establish and facilitate “Young Inspectors” sessions or staff training and supporting Children in Care Council (events and activities, etc.).
* Promote good engagement practice through training, support and advice for colleagues.

**Work inclusively and sensitively with cohorts and individuals including those who are vulnerable:**

* Responsible for ensuring and promoting the welfare of children and young people, including for groups and individuals; familiarity with County Durham Child Protection Policies and Procedures.
* Ensure that adults participating in engagement activities are clear about their role in providing a safe environment and support for children and young people.

**General:**

* To attend team meetings and participate in team development.
* To contribute to the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems, which are robust and compatible with the quality audit inspection framework and which lead to improved evidence of the voice of the child in all casework.
* To contribute to relevant national, regional and local initiatives.
* The development, dissemination and evaluation of innovative and creative practice in Children’s Rights and Participation, which is concurrent with relevant theory and legislation.
* Responsible for carrying out all the duties of the job in accordance with the local authority’s policies and procedures.
* To undertake such other duties as are within the scope of the job purpose, the title of the job and its grading.
* To take part in and prepare for supervision and annual appraisal.

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| **Organisational responsibilities** |

* **Values and behaviours**

To demonstrate and be a role model for the council’s values and behaviours to promote and encourage positive behaviours, enhancing the quality and integrity of the services we provide.

* **Smarter working, transformation and design principles**

To seek new and innovative ideas to work smarter, irrespective of job role, and to be creative, innovative and empowered. Understand the operational impact of transformational change and service design principles to support new ways of working and to meet customer needs.

* **Communication**

To communicate effectively with our customers, managers, peers and partners and to work collaboratively to provide the best possible public service. Communication between teams, services and partner organisations is imperative in providing the best possible service to our public.

* **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

To take responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing in accordance with the council’s Health and Safety Policy and procedures.

* **Equality and diversity**

To promote a society that gives everyone an equal change to learn, work and live, free from discrimination and prejudice and ensure our commitment is put into practice. All employees are responsible for eliminating unfair and unlawful discrimination in everything that they do.

* **Confidentiality**

To work in a way that does not divulge personal and/or confidential information during the course of their work and follow the council’s policies and procedures in relation to data protection and security of information.

* **Climate Change**

To contribute to our corporate responsibility in relation to climate change by considering and limiting the carbon impact of activities during the course of your work, wherever possible.

* **Performance management**

To promote a culture whereby performance management is ingrained and the highest of standards and performance are achieved by all. Contribute to the council’s Performance and Development Review processes to ensure continuous learning and improvement and to increase organisational performance.

* **Quality assurance (for applicable posts)**

To set, monitor and evaluate standards at individual, team and service level so that the highest standards of service are delivered and maintained. Use data, where appropriate, to enhance the quality of service provision and support decision making processes.

* **Management and leadership (for applicable posts)**

To provide vision and leadership to inspire and empower all employees so they can reach their full potential and contribute to the council’s values and behaviours. Managers and leaders must engage in personal development to ensure they are equipped to lead transformational change; always searching for better ways to do things differently to meet organisational changes and service priorities.

* **Financial management (for applicable posts)**

To manage a designated budget, ensuring that the service achieves value for money in all circumstances through the monitoring of expenditure and the early identification of any financial irregularity.

*The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by your manager.*

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| Person specification |
|  | Essential | Desirable |
| Qualifications | * Dip SW, CQSW, CSS, or
* Other recognised professional qualification e.g. Youth & Community, Teaching, Health

And/or* Relevant Degree or HNC
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| Experience | * Substantial experience of working directly with children and young people, building effective relationships and securing improved outcomes.
* Excellent practice in supporting the active and meaningful participation of children and young people in influencing decision-making;
* Working effectively with professionals from a diverse range of organisations
* Using initiative to organise own workload
* Using policies and procedures in practice
* Using IT, digital platforms and social media to support effective working
* Application of legislation and national standards relevant to the role
 | * Care planning for children in need or in need of protection
* Direct work with families who have complex and multiple needs
* Using child observation skills, genograms, ecomaps, chronologies and other evidence based tools to develop assessments
* Solution focussed, strength based, motivational methods of direct work, assessment and intervention
* Working in an integrated team
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| Skills & Knowledge | * Knowledge of a range of legislation that supports the human rights of children and young people
* Knowledge of participation and engagement theories relevant to the role
* Knowledge of the main services and resources provided by the statutory, voluntary and independent sector
* Good working knowledge of child protection policy, process and procedures.
* Good understanding of the issues that affect children and young people and the barriers to their effective participation and engagement;
* Ability to empower and engage children, young people to have a voice and contribute to decisions which make long term positive changes for their future.
* IT literate
* Able to work under pressure to meet deadlines and work on own initiative.
* Good communication skills, written and verbal.
* Ability to relate to children and young people positive as individuals encouraging their participation, empowerment and achievement.
* Self-motivated;
* Able to work in partnership with a range of services and service users*.*
 | * Recent Government initiatives affecting the effective participation and engagement of children and young people
* Ability to identify relevant research and apply to practice
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| Personal Qualities | * Persistence, determination and professional confidence;
* Commitment and enthusiasm to achieving positive long term outcomes and promoting the active and effective participation and engagement of children and young people in decisions which affect their lives;
* Ability to recognise own professional limitations and know how and when to seek advice
* Anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice and non-judgemental stance
* Ability to work flexible hours, including some evenings and weekends
* Hold a current driving licence and have access to a car or access to a means of mobility support. (If driving must have current valid driving licence and appropriate insurance).
* Commitment to Continuous Professional Development
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