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| **Job Description** |
| **Post title** | Social Work Consultant, Fostering Service  |
| **JE Reference No** | N9112 |
| **Grade** | Grade 13  |
| **Service** | Children and Young Peoples Services |
| **Service Area** | Children’s Social Care, Fostering Service  |
| **Reporting to** | Team Manager within Childrens Services |
| **Location** | An approved team location, 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 |
| **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 Social Worker Consultant will work with the Team Manager to manage and supervise workers within the Fostering Service to ensure high quality and effective services are delivered to children and their foster carers in line with procedures, legislation and national guidance.

The Social Worker Consultant will play a key role in developing and monitoring the competency of social care practitioners through developing, maintaining and championing expertise in specific areas of work within the Fostering Service; driving best practice based on research evidence and professional experience.

You will provide constructive challenge to enhance practice, procedures and policies, promote innovation and introduce new ways of working from recognised areas of excellence. You will contribute to the development of knowledge and promotion of excellence within the team making use of sophisticated, critical reasoning as well as modelling and facilitating reflective and evidence-based decision making.

You will have key lead responsibilities for specific areas within the Fostering Service. These are:

* Recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers.
* Early Permanence Planning, linking and matching and oversight of children’s carers.
* Family and Friends assessments.
* Support to foster carers.
* Specialist fostering Xtra scheme.

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| **Duties and responsibilities** |

Listed below are the responsibilities this role will be primarily responsible for:

**Supporting Front line Practice**

* Supporting the team manager to ensure that effective systems are in place for managing workload, compliance with policies and procedures and good performance.
* Reflective case discussions with members of the team.
* Ensure that decision making and practice within the team and service is if the highest quality, recorded, evidence based, and outcome focused.
* To support the Team Manager in providing timely and robust responses to complaints.
* Chairing of meetings as required.
* To ensure that all staff work within relevant legal, regulatory, procedural and policy frameworks.
* To develop systems for effective engagement with foster carers to ascertain their feedback and ensure they are central to future service developments.
* Support the effective and consistent delivery of the work in the team in the absence of the team manager.

**Leadership**

* Supervision and line management of staff who are working in the team.
* Represent the Local Authority in a range of formal and informal settings.
* Facilitate team meetings and team development plans in conjunction with the team manager.
* To demonstrate through personal and professional example a commitment to equality of opportunity for all groups of staff and service users and to challenge discrimination, racism, sexism and other forms of unjust behaviour.

**Performance management**

* To be responsible, together with the team manager for the provision of management information and its analysis to inform service provisions and meet performance indicators.
* Ensure that all assessments are produced within national and local timescales and are of sufficient quality to ensure high standards are met.
* To complete case file audits and themed audits within the team to ensure practice is of a high quality and ensure a cycle of continuous improvement.

**Practice Development**

* Provision of mentoring, coaching, and support to members of the team.
* This includes practice learning for Student Social Workers and NQSW’s on the ASYE programme and induction of new staff.
* Assist with the professional development of all practitioners within the team, identifying suitable learning opportunities and their implementation into practice.
* To lead on areas of developing practice within their team and wider services, extending knowledge, skills and expertise throughout the service.
* Facilitating peer group supervision and reflective supervision as required.
* Deliver good practice sessions and training and ensure that there is good dissemination of current research, evidence-based practice, policy, guidance, legislation and case law relating to children and families.
* Undertake direct observations of practice, supporting reflective thinking, giving feedback and mentoring/coaching others using a variety of adult learning styles.
* To contribute to the development and implementation of policies and procedures and changes to the approach to social work and family work practice as and when required.
* The Post Holder will be required to demonstrate a commitment towards structuring their own training and development.

**The post holder will also be required to:**

* To maintain their current Social Work England registration and adhere to the Social Work England codes of practice.
* To work flexibly to meet the needs of the service which may include the need for some weekend working and out of hours duties.

The above outlines an overview of the duties required however, this is not comprehensive, or an exclusive list and duties may be varied from time to time. This does not change the general character of the post or the level of responsibility entailed.

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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 procedure.

* **Equality and diversity**

To promote a society that gives everyone an equal chance 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.

* **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 | * Degree in social work or equivalent social work qualification, e.g. Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (PDDipSW) Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW), Diploma in Social Work (DipSW), Certificate in Social Services (CSS)
* Current Social Work England Registration
 | * NVQ level 4 in management or equivalent
* Achievement of Post Qualification Award
* Staff development qualification e.g. NVQ assessor, Practice teaching, coaching mentoring, Cert Ed etc
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| Experience | * Substantial and recent post qualifying experience in statutory social work with children and families including LAC and Permanence.
* Experience of developing others by using a range of different techniques such as practice teaching, training, mentoring and observations of practice
* Experience of interagency work
* Working with staff from a diverse range of organisations
* Significant experience of identifying and responding to need and risk
* Significant experience of the social work role across the children’s social care remit including assessment and planning
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* Experience of involving service users to ensure their views are heard and implemented into service improvement
* Experience of co-ordinating and chairing meetings
* Substantial experience in the application and use of a range of social work intervention and assessment tools
 | * Experience of supervising staff and/or students
* Facilitating group case discussion e.g. though group supervision, learning communities
* Supporting practitioners to meet their aspirations
* Using data to understand and improve performance
* Ensuring that processes are fit for purpose and efficient
* Service project development and implementing innovative practice
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| Skills & Knowledge | * Ability to place the child at the centre of all practice, decision making and recording processes
* Ability to guide others, understand and manage need and risk across the threshold continuum
* Knowledge of a range of social work interventions and methods and a commitment to use of solution focused, strength-based approaches with families
* Up to date knowledge of Social Work theory and practice and knowledge of current childcare legislation, statutory guidance and child protection procedures
* Highly developed skills in the ability to summarise, analyse and evaluate complex information and manage risk
* Ability to deal with emotional distress and challenging behaviour, including aggression
* Ability to work on own initiative, organise workload, prioritise, achieve deadlines and work under pressure
* Ability to write concise, analytical reports
* Excellent communication skills with children, families and other professionals
* Ability to lead social care professionals to deliver high quality services
* Ability to manage and support the process of change and an understanding of how to support people to change
* Ability to quality assure work to a high standard and give constructive feedback
* A high level of consultative, interpersonal and negotiation skills including the ability to deal with complex issues in a sensitive and appropriate way
* Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships across the council and with external partners
* Ability to promote service user’s and young people’s participation
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| Personal Qualities | * Commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people and families
* Recognise, respect and value the expertise of practitioners
* Professional integrity
* Creative/innovative approach to work
* Resilience
* Reliable
* Clarity of purpose
* Open, honest and assertive manner
* Commitment to creating an environment that promotes equality and diversity
* Ability to recognise own professional limitations and know how and when to seek advice
* Ability to work flexible hours, including some evenings and weekends
* Hold a current driving licence and have access to a car (social workers with a disability must have access to a means of mobility support)
* Commitment to Continuous Professional Development
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