

Service Manager Fostering Recruitment, Assessment and Retention Grade 13

About the Service

Our ambition is that children unable to live with their families experience safe, nurturing, high quality care that meets individual needs and enables them to thrive. We act as strong corporate parents, ensuring children's needs, rights and experiences sit at the center of decisions, and we recognise and invest in our foster carers, kinship carers and adopters, who provide family based care and stability. Having a sense of belonging is critical for our children and from day one, we focus on permanence through long term fostering, kinship, adoption, and reunification.

About the Role

The Service Manager for Fostering Recruitment, Assessment and Retention, provides operational leadership and management across 3 key areas ensuring that sufficient, high quality foster carers are recruited, supported and retained to meet the needs of children and young people. Reporting to the Head of Service, the role is responsible for translating strategic sufficiency, recruitment and placement priorities into effective operational practice, ensuring services are delivered in line with statutory requirements, national minimum standards, local policy and agreed quality standards.

The role requires strong financial and resource management within delegated budgets, ensuring fostering services are delivered efficiently and sustainably while maintaining a clear focus on placement stability and positive outcomes for children. The Service Manager contributes to financial planning and monitoring, identifying recruitment pressures, capacity risks and market challenges early, and supporting solutions that balance affordability with the delivery of safe, high quality fostering provision.



As a key operational leader within Children and Families services, the Service Manager plays an active role in driving service improvement through the Continuous Improvement Plan. This includes managing operational risk, embedding learning from audits, inspections, complaints and feedback from foster carers and children, and promoting a culture of reflective practice, learning and accountability. The role models strong corporate parenting values and ensures that the voices and lived experiences of children and foster carers inform service development and improvement.

A core responsibility of the Service Manager is to ensure compliance with statutory duties and guidance relating to fostering, including recruitment and assessment processes, approval and review of foster carers, supervision and support arrangements, training and development, and fostering panel functions. The role maintains oversight of performance and quality assurance activity across fostering teams, using data and performance information to challenge, support and improve practice, carer experience and retention outcomes.

The Service Manager has responsibility for the development and delivery of an effective marketing and communications strategy for fostering, working closely with corporate communications and partner agencies to promote the local fostering offer. This includes overseeing targeted recruitment campaigns, strengthening public awareness and engagement, ensuring consistent and compelling messaging, and using insight and performance data to evaluate impact and adapt approaches to attract and retain foster carers from diverse backgrounds.

Reporting Relationships

Responsible to: Head of Service

Responsible for: Fostering Recruitment and Training Team, Fostering Assessment and Panel Team, Kinship Assessment North, Kinship Assessment South, Family Support Team

Key Accountabilities:

1. Strategic Leadership & Service Development

- Provide operational direction and leadership for Children in Care, ensuring alignment with organisational vision, values, and outcomes.
- Lead the development, implementation, and evaluation of local strategies including the Sufficiency Strategy and Corporate Parenting Strategy. Develop local improvements, and change programs to deliver high-quality, effective, and sustainable services for our children in care and foster carers.
- Support a culture of innovation, continuous improvement, and learning within the team and across partnerships delivering effective and robust whole system Corporate Parenting functions.
- Lead, motivate, and develop the service, ensuring effective supervision, support and challenge are implemented in line with organisational policies and service needs

2. Partnership & Collaborative Working

- Build and maintain effective partnerships with internal teams, external agencies, and stakeholders to deliver integrated, joined-up services. To champion and promote improved outcomes for Children in Care.
- Lead or attend multi-agency working groups or networks to address complex needs and improve outcomes for children and foster carers to reduce barriers and ensure improved outcomes for children.
- Represent the organisation at local, regional, and national forums, championing best practice and raising issues requiring external support.
- To work collaboratively with internal and external commissioning colleagues to identify gaps in support to enable the effective commissioning of provision within for children and foster carers

3. Service Delivery & Performance Management

- Ensure service delivery is evidence-based, outcome-focused, and responsive to emerging needs and legislative changes by utilising performance information to understand service development requirements
- Develop, monitor, and report on performance frameworks, targets, and quality assurance processes to drive continuous improvement to deliver effective, purposeful and sustained outcomes for children and foster carers

- To lead an outcome-based model of performance which is informed by best practice, lessons learned, serious case reviews and the use of appropriate data which then feeds the strategic needs analysis and the service design and delivery.
- Develop and implement service guidance, policies, and procedures to ensure effective, efficient and consistent intervention and support.
- Undertaking the role of Agency Decision Maker

4. User Engagement & Co-production

- Promote and facilitate the active participation of children in care and foster carers in innovative service design, delivery, and review.
- To be an advocate and champion for the voice of children within our care by promoting communication, and engagement which ensures that children, parents, carers and families can inform, influence and shape the Children and Families agenda.

5. Resource & Project Management

- Operating within budget, managing resources to deliver services effectively and efficiently within financial constraints
- Develop and oversee plans to drive timely and successful delivery of change projects and transformation initiatives.
- The development and delivery of an effective marketing and communications strategy for fostering
- Identify and mitigate risks, resolving issues to ensure successful outcomes.
- As part of the leadership of the Children's System work collaboratively to ensure that we deliver our vision, aspiration and outcomes. Working to create a culture of innovation, an environment of trust and a system where we challenge and support each other to drive improvement change and encourage learning.

Person Specification

Qualifications/Professional membership

- Degree or equivalent level qualification.
- A qualified and registered Social Worker.
- A relevant professional/management qualification or evidence of substantial management training

Knowledge and Experience

- Substantial experience in managing teams within children's social care within a multi-agency environment.
- In-depth knowledge, understanding and experience of working with relevant legislation policy and procedures, including the statutory framework for fostering, National Minimum Standards and relevant statutory guidance.
- Effective understanding of placement sufficiency and stability
- Experience of leading foster recruitment activity and an understanding of marketing and communications strategies.
- Experience of overseeing high quality fostering assessments.
- Experience of fostering panel management including governance, and regulatory compliance.
- In-depth understanding of statutory frameworks, national agendas, and best practice for children in care
- Experience in managing and implementing service development, change programs, and operational planning
- Ability to make sound judgements and hold risk appropriately based on analysis of the relevant facts in planned and unplanned circumstances
- Supervisory and management experience and knowledge of relevant HR guidance and procedure
- Proven ability to work collaboratively with internal and external partners, including multi-agency groups.
- Track record of delivering effective, high-quality services and driving continuous improvement.
- In-depth understanding of statutory frameworks, national agendas, and best practice in the children in care.
- Successful experience in managing budgets, resources, and financial accountability.
- Experience in successfully developing and monitoring performance frameworks, quality assurance, and reporting.

Skills

- Ability to inspire, motivate, and manage teams towards successfully achieving organisational goals.

- Proven management qualities, including the capability to drive improvement and foster a positive culture
- Effective verbal and written communication skills with the ability to communicate complex information clearly to a variety of audiences
- Developed negotiating and influencing skills, able to build consensus and secure commitment from a wide range of stakeholders
- Interpersonal skills for building and sustaining effective relationships with staff, partners, and stakeholders.
- Highly organised and analytical with a logical approach to problem solving and an ability to analyse complex information and situations to make effective evidence-based decisions
- Ability to develop, monitor and report on performance frameworks and quality assurance processes
- Effective budget and resource management skills
- Ability to manage and implement change programmes and service improvements
- Ability to advocate for service users
- Demonstrate the ability to advocate for the empowerment and development employees
- Evidence of and commitment to ongoing professional learning and development
- Flexible, autonomous, and able to manage competing priorities as part of a wider team.

This role is a designated casual car user.

The content of this Job Description and Person Specification will be reviewed on a regular basis.