

Principal Social Worker for Children

Grade 14

About the Service

The Children and Families directorate aims to create an inclusive environment where families are supported to stay together safely and live well in their communities, building on their strengths and achieving their outcomes, supported by secure relationships and long-term belonging. This is based upon safety as a whole system, shared across our services and partners. These are delivered through our 4 core principles:

- Families first - network and community always
- Right help, right time - proportionate, timely and co-produced with children and families.
- Whole-system responsibility for supporting children and families to be happy, healthy and safe.
- Permanence as belonging from day one.

Our strategic ambition for children and young people in Staffordshire: **Happy, Healthy, Safe, Belonging and Achieving.**

About the Role

The Principal Social Worker (PSW) acts as the professional lead for social work practice across the directorate. The role champions social work excellence, drives workforce development and training, leads quality assurance and continuous improvement, and provides oversight for inspections.

he PSW oversees induction, training pathways, and continuous professional development (CPD) for all social care practitioners; aligned to Social Work England standards, national best practice, and organisational priorities. This role works collaboratively with HR and Learning & Development teams to build a stable, skilled, and confident workforce, while providing

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professional oversight of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and student placements.

The PSW also leads key participation projects, ensuring the voices and experiences of children and young people directly inform service design, delivery, and strategic priorities.

This post is pivotal in driving excellent social work practice ensuring statutory duties under the Children Act 2004 and safeguarding frameworks are met. This role will strategically lead in framing and developing social care elements of the SEND strategy across the local authority, in compliance with legislative requirements of the SEND Code of Practice (2015); providing leadership, operational guidance and direction in the way social care services are identified and delivered for those with SEN, disabled children, young people 0-25.

The Principal Social Worker drives integrated working with health, education, police, and voluntary sectors to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

The PSW promotes an innovative, reflective and learning organisation which strives to continually improve. This role leads the directorate's quality assurance framework, ensuring robust auditing, performance analysis, and learning loops.

The PSW identify areas of risk, variation, and underperformance and provides clear actions for improvement and strategic oversight and coordination This role also leads on post ofsted inspection action planning, ensuring learning is embedded and progress is reported at all governance levels, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and regulatory expectations.

The PSW champions a strong culture of reflective practice, restorative approaches, and evidence-informed intervention through practice development initiatives, including thematic reviews, learning events, and practice standards.

Represent the directorate at local, regional, and national networks; build strong relationships with partners, promoting

interdisciplinary collaboration and collective ownership of safeguarding and improvement priorities.

Reporting Relationships

Responsible to: Deputy Director Children & Families

Responsible for: Designated Social Care Officer (OSCO), Service Manager for Quality Assurance, VOICE - Project Manager, Team manager for practice development & training

Key Accountabilities:

1. Strategic Leadership & Service Development

- Provide strategic direction and leadership and work collaboratively to deliver our vision, aspiration and outcomes in a culture of innovation, an environment of trust and a system where challenge and support drives improvement and encourage learning.
- Lead the development, implementation, and evaluation of service improvements, and change programs to deliver high-quality, effective, and sustainable practice and services.
- Foster a culture of innovation, continuous improvement, and learning within the service and across partnerships.
- Lead, motivate, and develop the service, ensuring effective supervision, support, and deployment in line with organisational policies and service needs.
- Provide expert advice to senior leaders, elected members, and multi-agency partners on social work practice, trends, and risk.
- Maintain high visibility across services, modelling exemplary practice and promoting a learning culture.

2. Partnership & Collaborative Working

- Build and maintain effective partnerships with internal teams, external agencies, and stakeholders to deliver integrated, joined-up services.
- Lead multi-agency working groups or networks to address complex needs and improve outcomes for service users.

- Represent the organisation at local, regional, and national forums, championing best practice and raising issues requiring external support.

3. Service Delivery & Performance Management

- Ensure service delivery is evidence-based, outcome-focused, and responsive to emerging needs and legislative changes.
- Develop, monitor, and report on performance frameworks, targets, and quality assurance processes to drive continuous improvement.

4. User Engagement & Co-production

- Promote and facilitate the active participation of service users in the innovative design, delivery, and review of services to develop services that meets children's needs.
- Advocate for the voice of children, families, and vulnerable groups, ensuring their needs and experiences inform service development.

5. Resource & Project Management

- Responsible for the management of budgets and resources to deliver services efficiently and effectively and within financial constraints.
- Develop and oversee plans to drive timely and successful delivery of change programmes and transformation initiatives.
- Identify and mitigate risks, resolving issues to ensure successful outcomes.

Person Specification

Qualifications/Professional membership

- Recognised Social work qualification and registered with Social Work England
- A relevant professional/management qualification or evidence of substantial management training

Knowledge and Experience

- Extensive experience in children's social care practice and management.
- Demonstrated experience- in quality assurance, workforce development, or inspection preparation.
- Strong understanding of legislative frameworks, statutory guidance, and regulatory requirements.
- Proven ability to lead strategic practice improvement.
- Track record of engaging children, young people, and families in co-production or participation work.
- Proven experience of successful inter-agency and partnership work, building relationships and trust.
- Proven ability to embrace innovative practices and developments, lead change and project manage/ pilot new initiatives
- Substantial knowledge, understanding of primary legislation and statutory guidance in relation to the care and protection of children and safeguarding and how this translates into policy and practice which works with families
- Experience of successfully leading, managing and motivating a high performing team
- Significant experience in leading teams and services within a multi-agency environment.
- In-depth understanding of statutory frameworks, national agendas, and best practice in the relevant field (e.g., safeguarding, education, fostering, youth justice).
- Successful experience in managing budgets, resources, and financial accountability.

Skills

- A credible professional leader with excellent communication and influence; with analytical, evaluative, and problem-solving skills.
- Skilled in project management and driving cross-directorate initiatives.

- An ability to advocate for children, championing their rights and to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Skilled at collaborative working and demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence, resilience, and reflective practice.
- Ability to inspire, motivate, and lead teams towards successfully achieving organisational goals, with integrity, respect and strengths- based practice.
- Proven leadership qualities that fosters learning and partnership work and drives improvements
- Highly developed negotiating and influencing skills, able to build consensus and secure commitment from a wide range of 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
- Effective verbal and written communication skills with the ability to communicate complex information clearly to a variety of audiences
- Ability to work in a flexible, autonomous way, while managing competing priorities.
- Ability and experience of using IT systems
- Ability to develop, monitor and report on performance frameworks and quality assurance processes

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