**Job Description**

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| Job Title: Principal Social Worker |
| POSCODE: |
| Grade: P5 |

**Overall purpose of the job**

The Childrens Principal Social Worker (PSW) provides professional leadership for social work across children’s social care. They will ensure that the voice of people with lived experience continuously informs practice and that the activity undertaken by practitioners drives the best outcomes for our citizens, upholding their human rights and supporting them to live their lives in the way they choose. They are an ambassador for social work in the local authority, leading a culture where practice is valued, equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded and it is widely accepted that the service is a place where a diverse range of practitioners want to come and work.

The PSW contributes to the quality and assurance of practice, ensuring the right governance is in place, identifying priorities for improvement and driving that improvement continuously forwards. They ensure that the council is ready to articulate and demonstrate practice activity, strengths and improvement plans for statutory reporting and assurance purposes, and lead on ensuring the council’s performance relating to practice in assurance activity undertaken by the regulator is strong.

The role reports directly to the Executive Director of Children’s Services (DCS) and works closely with Assistant Directors, Heads of Service and all key colleagues across Children’s social care and external partners to shape, influence, guide and promote social work practice. They are the voice for social work within the management team and outward facing to external stakeholders. They ensure the service upholds social work values and standards and supports its practitioners, offering positive challenge to decision makers where needed. They must maintain visible leadership across the social work and alternatively qualified workforce, being ready to offer advice on the most complex and high risk situations. They will be an ambassador of strengths based practice and will lead an approach to our citizens that is person centred and community connected.

The PSW is responsible for ensuring plans are in place to support the professional development of children’s social workers, improve retention and recruitment, succession plan for key roles that the council has pipelines in place to secure its future practitioners.

Takes collective and shared responsibility for the effective leadership and management of the Council’s services and delivery of improved outcomes and the achievement of value for money.

**Main accountabilities**

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|  | **Main accountabilities** |
|  | Work autonomously, at pace and with demonstrable impact to lead social work within the local authority, providing assurance to the DCS of the local authority’s adherence to practice standards and statutory requirements. |
|  | Lead on providing professional advice and guidance to the DCS, assistant directors, heads of service, service managers and wider workforce in relation to changes required by national and local drivers around social work standards, policy and statutory requirements e.g. Ofsted and the Social Care review reform. Lead on development of new related policies and processes in relation to this where needed. Be responsible for ensuring the Council is meeting its statutory and legal duties relating to Children’s social care legislation as it relates to practice and produce reports for internal and external audiences as required. |
|  | Provide strong, visible leadership of social work practice, promoting the profession within Childrens social care, wider council and externally, cultivating an image of childrens social work in the council being valued, supported and a place where people want to work. Lead with colleagues to ensure social workers and their alternatively qualified colleagues can see clear routes for career progression within the council. |
|  | Contribute to the delivery of an effective quality assurance strategy and systems to monitor and evaluate practice, identify areas for practice improvement and develop clear plans to achieve that. Lead on activity to deliver against those plans with outcomes that demonstrate tangible ways in which continuous improvement is being achieved, with improved outcomes for local citizens and the voice of people with lived experience at the heart of that. |
|  | Provide professional social work advice to colleagues across service areas at an operational and strategic level, including advising on childrens social care’s most complex practice situations, being the interface with legal colleagues where needed. Keep up to date with changes to national strategy, policy and legislation (including case law) and lead on activity for local interpretation and implementation. |
|  | Lead on the interface between Children’s Social Care operations and the council’s learning and development offer. Ensure that this supports effective recruitment and retention of social work staff including oversight of activity relating to apprenticeship programmes, newly qualified and return to practice routes and post qualifying qualifications and development opportunities. Ensure that the mandatory and advisory training requirements for social workers and alternatively qualified staff are well set out, regularly reviewed, complied with and are fit for purpose in embedding the skills needed to support good practice standards and meeting regulatory requirements. |
|  | Lead on promoting the council as an excellent employer of social workers with external bodies, such as universities and HE colleges, ensuring visibility to potential future practitioners. Ensure that a strategy is in place that projects longer term workforce need and set out pipelines to meet that need. |
|  | Be active in networks of other social work leaders both regionally and nationally. Ensure that the voice of social work, and specifically the views of social workers and alternatively qualified colleagues in the council are heard not just internally but in response to external consultations, policy development etc. Acquire, distil and ensure the workforce access to the very latest and best practice thinking and work collaboratively with Heads of Service, Service Managers and staff to embed this into everyday practice in the council. |
| 10. | Represent the Council in work with partner agencies as required, taking a leading role in some areas of work beyond the immediate council, including:   * Principal Social Worker Networks, Regional and National * ADASS Regional Forum events   Safeguarding Partnership Board |
| 11. | Provide strategic leadership in the development of approaches to assessment and planning and recording systems to enable practitioners to deliver the best possible outcomes in a way that is measurable. |
| 12. | **Safeguarding commitment**  We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people who are at risk of abuse or neglect. We require you to understand and demonstrate this commitment. |

**Safeguarding commitment** *(Include for roles involving work with children/vulnerable adults)*

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people/vulnerable adults. We require you to understand and demonstrate this commitment.

**Person Specification**

**Qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience**

Minimum level of qualifications required for this job

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| Qualifications Required | **Subject** | **Essential/**  **Desirable** |
| Degree in Social Work (or recognised equivalent) | **Social Work** | **Essential** |
| Post qualifying qualification | **Social Work** | **Desirable** |
| Social Work England - active registration |  | **Essential** |

Minimum levels of knowledge, skills and experience required for this job

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| Identify | Describe | Essential/Desirable |
| **Knowledge** | | |
| Legislation, government policy and practice guidance | In-depth knowledge of all applicable legislation, government policies and guidance for delivering Childrens services, safeguarding children at risk and the factors which lead to positive outcomes for children and young people. | Essential |
| Comprehensive knowledge of best practice for Children social work and robust mechanisms in place, including established relationships with key local and national forums and leaders, to ensure that knowledge remains up to date. | Essential |
|  | Good knowledge of service planning, needs assessment, consultation, option appraisal etc. | Essential |
|  | Current, up to date understanding of regulatory requirements around assurance activity planned or regularly undertaken by Ofsted or any other regulatory body relating to childrens social care | Essential |
| Anti-discriminatory Practice | In-depth knowledge, commitment to and ability to lead others around issues of equality, diversity, and anti-discriminatory practice and behaviours in the workplace. | Essential |
| Practice Standards and quality assurance | A high level of skill in the development and use of quality assurance strategies, governance, monitoring processes, professional standards, audit, impactful action and the voice of people with lived experience to establish and maintain continuous improvement in practice and outcomes and ensure regulatory compliance. | Essential |
| Change management | Ability to instigate and lead projects and programmes to achieve change, including acting as senior responsible owner and delivering outcomes through others. | Essential |

**Disclosure level**

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| What disclosure level is required for this post? | None | Standard |
| Enhanced | Enhanced with barred list checks |

**Work type**

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| What work type does this role fit into? (tick one box that reflects the main work type, the default work type is hybrid) | Fixed | Hybrid  x | Field | Remote | Mobile |