



What Works *for*
**Children's
Social Care**

**Practice Development
Manager**

Candidate Brief

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming Practice Development Manager at What Works for Children's Social Care.

We are an exciting 'social start-up' and this is a fantastic opportunity to make a difference to the lives of children and their families in England. Every year over 700,000 children and young people, and their families, have contact with the children's social care sector. Changes in how the sector supports these children and their families can have hugely significant effects that resonate throughout entire lifetimes.

The Government's reform programme is increasingly giving control over how services should be run – along with accountability for the results – to the practitioners and practice leaders who are closest to children, young people and their families. Local authorities up-and-down the country, and supported by a range of other organisations both statutory and third sector, are using that freedom to try different ways of designing and delivering children's services, and up to £200m is being provided through the Department for Education (DfE) Innovation Programme to support this work.

With so much innovation taking place – and so much potential for change – the sector needs an independent organisation to look across all of this work and systematically develop the evidence base on what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and how. This is the best encapsulation of the What Works mission – to collect the best evidence on what we already know, work with the sector to prioritise the many questions that remain unanswered, fund research, and determine how best to make evidence relevant and accessible to decision makers. What Works Centres have been a great success in other policy areas – including in education, policing and healthcare – and we expect great things from What Works for Children's Social Care, which will be a fully-financed and independent body by March 2020.

Reporting to the Centre's Head of Practice, the Practice Development Manager will engage with social workers and the wider sector, supporting local authorities to develop evidence mindedness and evidence readiness, and play a leading role in our "Practice in Need of Evidence" programme, building capacity and evidence around promising practice developed by practitioners. As well as this, the Practice Development Manager will work alongside our Research, Programmes and Operations teams across every aspect of the Centre's work, to ensure that the voice of practice is a part of everything we do.

Thanks once again for your interest and we look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Sanders

Executive Director, What Works for Children's Social Care

Role Description

1. To bring experience of social work practice to the delivery of the WWC's engagement and cultural change strategy.
2. Work with local authority partners to deliver tools and services that improve capacity for organisational evidence-mindedness.
3. Promote, project manage and deliver WWCSC's Practice in Need of Evidence programme and thereby support social care organisation to undertake high quality evaluation of promising practice.
4. Use the WWC engagement structure to bring messages from the sector, including from children and young people, families, practitioners, practice leaders and the wider sector, into the WWC and use them to deliver the WWC's core aims and objectives.
5. Represent the WWC at events and through communication with the sector, in particular with practitioners, to improve evidence-informed practice and further the aims of the Centre.
6. Support a movement for evidence-informed practice amongst social work practitioners through leadership workshops and running regional and national events.
7. Support and lead on innovative ways of engaging the social work workforce to understand capability, motivation and opportunity to use evidence and communicate messages about what works.
8. Contribute to the content of the WWC Evidence Store with particular focus on ensuring research findings are communicated clearly and support real world implementation.
9. Support WWC events to promote research partnerships with the sector, facilitate fora to deliberate complex issues and communicate our research findings with an understanding of practice context.
10. Support the development of a WWC social work education offering to improve capability, motivation and opportunity for practitioners to use evidence and be involved in the generation of research.

The Attributes We Are Looking for in a Practice Development Manager

Essential

1. Social work qualification.
2. HCPC registered social worker.
3. Experience of practice in statutory children's social care organisation.
4. Excellent written and oral communication skills, including experience of public speaking and delivery of training.
5. Understanding of the social work practice landscape and challenges.
6. Commitment to social work values and ethics.
7. Understanding of, and commitment to, working to meet the needs of a diverse group of beneficiaries and stakeholders and the challenges and barriers associated with this.

Desirable

8. Interest in evidence-informed practice and research methods in children's social care.
9. Experience of practice development and/or social work education.
10. Understanding of organisational development and implementing cultural change in organisations and across the sector.
11. Experience of maintaining multiple stakeholder relationships.
12. Political awareness.

Initial Terms and Conditions of Appointment

Remuneration

£35,000 to £45,000 pa dependent on experience, plus standard Nesta benefits package.

Time Commitment

This is a full-time role.

Location

Central London. Travel around England is a requirement of the post.

Term

A fixed initial term of December 2019 to March 31st 2020.

Possibility of transitioning into permanent role once the organisation is independently constituted. We would consider and welcome candidates interested in secondments from other organisations.

Option to have this as a secondment.

Other

This role reports to the Centre's Head of Practice.

This role is not a public appointment.

About Us

What Works for Children's Social Care seeks better outcomes for children, young people and families by bringing the best available evidence to practitioners and other decision makers across the children's social care sector. We generate, collate and make accessible the best evidence for practitioners, policy makers and practice leaders to improve children's social care and the outcomes it generates for children and families.

Our research looks at the point of referral through to permanence, including adoption, care-leaver support and targeted early help. We focus on children's social care practice in England and draw on and share learning at the international level.

We were commissioned by the Department for Education to work alongside CASCADE at Cardiff University. Engagement and co-design are central to our approach and we are working in close consultation with leaders, practitioners, children and young people, families and researchers across the sector to:

- Identify gaps in the evidence, and create new evidence through trials and evaluations
- Collate, synthesise and review existing evidence
- Develop, test and publish tools and services that support the greater use of evidence and inform the design of the future Centre
- Champion the application of robust standards of evidence in children's social care research.

WWCSC collates, produces, and translates research about "What Works" in Children's Social Care through a variety of different methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, to conduct research that can be used by social workers, leaders in the sector and policymakers to support children and their families.

To do this, all of our research needs to adhere to our four principles:

- Research needs to focus on impact – how does a piece of practice work, how does it impact on social workers, and if we take one action rather than another, what happens as a result?
- We need to bear in mind the nuance of social care. The lives of children and families are complex and complicated, and there are many factors involved in successful social work. What works in one setting for one family might not work in a different circumstance. We need to design our research to take into account – and even celebrate – this complexity.
- Studies have to be useful – if we can't identify who we think should be able to make use of a piece of research, it's not for us. While there is certainly value in more exploratory research, this is not part of the Centre's mission and objectives.
- Everything we do needs to help empower the profession. Our research needs to be conducted with the profession, and not done to them – it needs to provide recommendations, not prescriptions, and it needs to support existing and innovative practice to grow the evidence base.

How to apply

To apply, please send your CV and a supporting statement outlining clearly how you would succeed in the role to recruitment@nesta.org.uk, citing “WWC Practice Development Manager” in the Subject of the email.

Deadline for applications: 7th October 12pm