



What Works *for*
Children's
Social Care

Self Evaluation Project Manager

Candidate Brief

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming Self Evaluation Project Manager - Practice in Need of Evidence Lead at What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC).

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 became fully-financed and independent Charity in April 2020.

Reporting to the Centre's Director of Practice, the Self Evaluation Project Manager - PINE Lead, will engage with social workers and the wider sector. You will manage the development and implementation of our Practice In Need of Evidence programme, at the core of which is our PINE portal, working with more than 20 local authorities around the country to help them to build an evidence base around their practice. You will also be involved in emerging areas of work for the team, where we have yet to develop or fund research but which are priorities for the sector.

As a senior member of the team, you 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 Chief Executive, What Works for Children's Social Care

The role

Practice In Need of Evidence (PINE) is our programme to develop early stage research that can inform our larger programmes, while helping partners to evaluate their own projects and programmes and helping to create an evidence-minded profession.

The programme has been running since early 2019 and has grown quickly over a short period of time, now working with more than 20 partners, and we are keen to see this expand further under an entrepreneurial leader.

As our PINE lead you will manage and be the main contact for the PINE programme within the Practice team. The successful applicant will be adaptable, resilient and have great interpersonal skills. You'll also be a skilled manager with the ability to see potential in projects, have the drive to innovate and develop our work, with impressive organisational skills to get the job done. A committed team player, adept at working collaboratively and autonomously. You will prioritise building and maintaining highly effective working relationships with external stakeholders and partners as well as leading a small in house team.

You will be enthusiastic and ambitious about the scope of the project. Keen to support evaluation of promising practice within the sector and support our partners through the evaluation process. You will be keen to see the size of PINE expand to encompass a larger range of topics and local partners, and to potentially oversee its expansion overseas.

A commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is a must. You believe and act in a way that celebrates and encourages a range of experiences, views and values while reflecting on what you bring to these interactions.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Works closely with:

Internal - Practice development managers, Senior researchers, researchers and research assistants, chief executive.

External - Key stakeholders in social services, NHS and other public sector organisations.

The Person

Values:

1. Personal commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people, and their families.
2. A passion for the agenda around What Works Centres and the broader agenda around evidence-based policy and practice in public services.

Skills and Abilities:

3. Quality written and oral communication, able to produce high quality written reports, deliver impactful presentations, and facilitate discussions.
4. Proven project management skills including project planning and managing multiple stakeholders. Ability to manage multiple projects and prioritise accordingly, working independently.

Knowledge and Experience:

1. Significant understanding of statutory children's social care, or research, or both.
2. An entrepreneurial drive to see PINE succeed and expand..
3. Excellent written and oral communication skills, including experience of public speaking and delivery of training to a social work audience.
4. Passion for using evidence to improve the lives of young people and their families
5. Understanding of the social work practice landscape and challenges faced locally and nationally
6. A clear commitment to working with people who use services and carers in a sensitive and non judgmental way. The ability to evidence inclusive practice within diverse communities with a commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. A personal aspiration towards their implementation.
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.
8. To undertake any other duties appropriate to the level of the post that may be reasonably required.

9. Experience working in a fast paced, start-up environment (desirable)
10. Experience of practice development and/or social work education. (desirable)
11. Understanding of organisational development and implementing cultural change in organisations and across the sector. (desirable)
12. Experience of maintaining multiple stakeholder relationships. (desirable)
13. Politically aware and reflective. (desirable)
14. Experience developing a product of platform in a social purpose context(desirable)

Initial Terms and Conditions of Appointment

Remuneration

£40,000 - 55,000 pa dependent on experience.

Time Commitment:

Full-time role based in central London. Travel around England is a requirement of the post.

Term

Permanent

Other

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

This role is not a public appointment.

Introduction to the organisation

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 and work with a range of stakeholders. 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
- 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 meet the above criteria to hr@whatworks-csc.org.uk, citing “ Self Evaluation Project Manager” in the Subject of the email.

Deadline for applications: 07.08.20 5pm