



What Works *for* Children's Social Care

Director of Programmes Candidate Brief

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming Director of Programmes 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.

Reporting to the Centre’s Chief Executive, the Director of Programmes will oversee our ambitious programme of research funding, including our small grants scheme, open funding rounds, and education programmes. This portfolio of grants, totalling £16million in 2021-2022, includes both programme delivery and research and evaluation in a range of topic areas and throughout England. The role is available on a permanent, part time (0.5FTE, job share) basis.

What Works for Children’s Social Care is the largest funder of children’s social care research in England, and currently the largest funder of schools based research as well. Our ambitious research agenda is seeing a growing number of high quality impact evaluations being carried out to help improve the lives of young people and their families.

As a job share post, you will work closely with the existing Director of Programmes, and the Chief Executive to develop and execute the future of our centre.

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

Jermaine Ravalier
Director of Programmes, What Works for Children’s Social Care

The role

At What Works for Children’s Social Care, the Programmes team is responsible for funding the delivery of promising programmes or interventions (typically through Open Funding Rounds, or occasionally through direct awards) - as well as their accompanying evaluations. In addition to this, we also fund systematic reviews in key priority areas and have recently launched a Spark Grants Scheme to support early career researchers and others underrepresented in research. Crucially, the Programmes team works closely with our internal Research team who provide technical support and quality assurance on evaluation.

The Programmes team aims to:

1. **Raise the standards - and volume - of good quality research in the sector**, by maintaining a core focus on rigorous research, providing appropriate support, and by leading by example in the work that we fund.
2. **Encourage sector-led innovation and research in key priority areas** identified by the Centre.
3. **Attract experts and influential organisations from other sectors to children's social care research**, to broaden expertise in the sector and create opportunities for collaboration.

The Directors of Programmes lead a team of eight, which consists of a Head of Evaluation Programmes, a Head of Education Programmes, three Senior Programme Managers and three Programme Managers. The successful candidate will ultimately be responsible for the successful delivery of an existing portfolio of over 30 projects as well as distributing millions of pounds in grant funding to support innovative projects in children's social care each year.

Strategic leadership

- Setting and enforcing practices and processes around our funding of research
- Working with colleagues to set the priorities for our grant funding in future coming years
- Serving as a part of our senior management team, contributing to decisions making around the shape and future of the organisation.
- Making sure that What Works for Children's Social Care is a modern funder and maintains an emphasis on continuous improvement
- Fostering partnerships with other funders and identifying/developing co-funding opportunities

Programme management

- Leading on the development and delivery of our programmes, including overseeing numerous grants to local authorities and delivery partners around England.
- Working closely with the director of research to ensure that evaluations are commissioned well and that a high standard of work is produced.
- Consulting with our Practice, Policy and Communications teams to maximise dissemination and impact of our findings.
- Helping shape, design and deliver several our flagship funding programmes, including our education programme, open funding rounds, and small grants schemes
- Leading close collaboration with the Department for Education, the funder for the majority of our work, as well as contributing to regular progress reporting for the Department for Education
- Working with the Head of Programmes Evaluation and the Head of Education

Programmes to execute the organisation-wide strategy in the context of our funding programmes.

- Working with the Chief Executive to help shape the future of our work and ensuring its impact

Funding processes

- Ensuring that processes are in place to ensure that our funding is well spent.
- Chairing where appropriate funding panels and approving membership of those panels
- Briefing Trustees on funding panel decisions and where appropriate managing conflicts of interest
- Overseeing appointment processes for independent evaluators, and managing any conflicts of interest that arise
- Contributing to the continuous improvement of WWCS guidance, decision-making and grant management processes.

Other

- Line managing up to 2-3 individuals
- Representing the organisation at external meetings and events.
- Chairing Advisory Groups as needed; this could include determining membership, setting agendas and leading the overall discussion in meetings.
- Other ad-hoc duties, as required.

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:

1. Quality written and oral communication, able to produce high quality written reports, deliver impactful presentations, and facilitate discussions.
2. Proven project management skills including project planning and managing multiple stakeholders. Ability to manage multiple projects and prioritise accordingly, working independently.
3. The ability to work a fast paced organisation to deliver excellence across your programme of work
4. Entrepreneurial flare

Knowledge and Experience:

1. Significant understanding of education or children's social care, either as a researcher or a funder, or both.
2. Experience of working at senior level within an organisation, and helping to shape and deliver organisational strategy
3. Experience as a substantive funder of research and or interventions
4. Experience in leading a team managing complex projects including a large number of stakeholders, both evaluators, local authorities, and charities.
5. Experience building and working within frameworks for funding and reporting
6. Passion for using evidence to improve the lives of young people and their families
7. Excellent written and oral communication skills, including experience of public speaking and delivery of training to a social work audience.
8. 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.
9. To undertake any other duties appropriate to the level of the post that may be reasonably required.
10. Experience managing people who manage others
11. A commitment to ensuring the inclusivity of everything we do.
12. Experience working in a fast paced, start-up environment (desirable)
13. Understanding of organisational development and implementing cultural change in organisations and across the sector. (desirable)
14. Experience of maintaining multiple stakeholder relationships. (desirable)
15. Politically aware and reflective. (desirable)

Initial Terms and Conditions of Appointment

Remuneration: £60,000-80,000 pa dependent on experience.

Time Commitment: This role is a part time, 2.5 days a week job share. Based in central London with some working from home if requested. Travel around England is a requirement of the post.

Term: Permanent

Other: This role reports to the Centre's Chief Executive. 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 “ Director of Programmes” in the Subject of the email.

Deadline for applications: 1st February 2022

Interviews will take place in mid-February.