



What Works *for* Children's Social Care

Policy & Public Affairs Manager

Candidate Brief

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the Policy & Public Affairs Manager role at What Works for Children's Social Care.

What Works for Children's Social Care is a young charity, incorporated in April 2020 following a period of incubation inside Nesta, the UK's Innovation Charity. The organisation's mission is to dramatically increase the quality and quantity of research in children's social care to enable social workers, system leaders, and policymakers to make evidence informed decisions that impact on the lives of young people every day.

This represents an incredible opportunity to make a difference to the lives of children and their families. Every year, over 700,000 children and young people, along with their families, have contact with the children's social care sector - often at the most formative period in their lives. Changes in how we as a profession support these children and their families can have huge effects which last throughout their lives.

New ideas are emerging all the time throughout the sector and from voluntary organisations working closely with local authorities. New ideas alone are not enough to see an improvement in the lives of young people and their families - these ideas require rigorous evaluation, and support in scaling up, if their collective promise is to be realised. We are fortunate to be working with 21 organisations through our "Practice in Need of Evidence" programme, and a further 130 through our grant funding processes.

With so much innovation taking place, and so much potential for change, the sector needs an independent authority to look across all of this work and build the evidence on what works, for whom, where, and why. Our evidence store collates the best of currently available research, while our programmes and research teams work to close the evidence gaps we identify, and our practice and policy teams work to make sure that all of this is both informed by the voice of social work practice, and communicated to practitioners and policymakers for maximum effect.

Our sister What Works Centres have been a real success in other policy areas – including education, policing and healthcare - we have big shoes to fill, but substantial giants on whose shoulders to stand.

Reporting to the Director of Policy, the Policy & Public Affairs Manager will play an instrumental role in ensuring that the research we produce has the maximum impact for children. Translating research findings into policy recommendations and working to influence decision makers to adopt an evidence based approach, this new role presents an exciting opportunity to make a real difference.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Sanders

Chief Executive, What Works for Children's Social Care

The role

The Policy & Public Affairs Manager will play a leading role in delivering WWCS's policy strategy, ensuring our research has maximum impact with policy makers at a national and local level. Working collaboratively with our research, programmes and practice teams, this role will ensure our research has clear policy recommendations and oversee our public affairs and influencing activity to promote evidence based approaches to children's social care.

Responsibilities

- Develop evidence-based policy recommendations to improve the lives of children and young people with a social worker in line with WWCS's policy strategy.
- Oversee WWCS's public affairs activity, developing and maintaining relationships with politicians and advisors from across the political spectrum.
- Identify opportunities to influence policy development, legislation and service provision in line with WWCS's priorities.
- Produce clear and concise briefings and reports which ensure WWCS's research is presented in a way that makes it useful and accessible to policymakers at a local and national level.
- Develop external partnerships to strengthen WWCS's policy and public affairs activity.
- Represent WWCS at relevant events and conferences, and in meetings with parliamentarians, civil servants and third sector stakeholders.
- Work collaboratively with Research, Programmes and Practice colleagues to deliver integrated projects and support the strategic development of policy priorities.
- Manage the Policy Officer (when in post).
- Any other reasonable duties as specified by your line manager to further the objectives of WWCS.

The Person

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

Knowledge and experience

- Extensive experience in policy and public affairs roles, with a track record of delivering strategic policy and public affairs activity (E)
- Experience of developing and managing relationships with stakeholders (E)
- Knowledge of public policy procedures (at a national and local level) and parliamentary processes (E)
- An understanding of children's social care (D)
- Experience of line management (D)

Skills and abilities

- Excellent written communication skills with the ability to communicate technical concepts to nontechnical audiences, and make a clear and persuasive case for use of robust evidence in policy (E)
- An effective communicator with excellent interpersonal skills (E)
- Ability to manage multiple projects, to prioritise and deliver key outputs within agreed timelines (E)
- Ability to work both independently as part of a team (E)

(E) Essential (D) Desirable

Initial Terms and Conditions of Appointment

- **Remuneration:** Circa £40,000, plus excellent benefits
- **Time Commitment:** Full time role (37.5 hours per week) (flexible working considered).
- **Location:** Central London.
- **Term:** Permanent

Introduction to the Centre

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 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 meet the above criteria to hr@whatworks-csc.org.uk, citing “WWCSC Policy & Public Affairs Manager” in the Subject of the email.

Deadline for applications 1pm Tuesday 16th February 2021.