



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

**Researcher -
Quantitative**

Candidate Brief 2021

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the Researcher role at What Works for Children's Social Care.

What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) is an exciting 'social start-up' and 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, 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 £200m has been provided through the Department for Education's 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 WWCSC's 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 are working to follow in their footsteps.

Now, we are looking for a Researcher to join our team, and to help us deliver research projects in a wide variety of domains.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Sanders Chief Executive, What Works for Children's Social Care

The role

What Works for Children's Social Care is looking to recruit a Researcher to work in our research team. This role will work particularly on the team's growing portfolio of projects, including randomised controlled trials in children's social care. This research aims to help us to understand how best to support social workers and young people in contact with the care system, from the point of contact and referral, all the way through to foster care and adoption.

Among other responsibilities, the Researcher role will include:

- **Research design.** The Researcher will take the lead in designing robust evaluations to help establish the impact of interventions in children's social care. This will include through experimental and quasi-experimental approaches.
- **Research management and implementation.** The researcher will manage the implementation of the research. This covers project management, participant selection and recruitment, data protection compliance, keeping project leads up to date, and escalating concerns as appropriate.
- **Coding and statistical analysis.** The researcher will be required, with guidance and support, to conduct appropriate coding and statistical analysis to cover the live-cycle of a project. This includes conducting power calculations, randomisation, and then cleaning analysing large and complex data sets.
- **Capacity building.** The Researcher will work with partner organisations, as well as internally within What Works for Children's Social Care, to build capacity in research design, implementation, and analysis through collaborative working and through training.

While we would expect the Researcher to take the lead on specific projects in these areas, they will also receive adequate support from Senior Researcher throughout each project.

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.

Knowledge and Experience:

3. The Researcher will need a high level of expertise in analysing quantitative data for impact evaluation.
4. Experience in conducting randomised controlled trials (desirable).
5. Experience conducting quantitative evaluations, either experimental or quasi-experimental, in settings relevant to children's social care.
6. Experience working in a research organisation.
7. Training in econometrics or statistics for impact evaluation.

8. Experience working in or around the children's social care system, or otherwise with young people, is desirable.
9. Experience with the research design process.
10. Bachelors or Master degree in a relevant subject (quantitative social science).

Skills and Abilities:

11. High level of competence in Stata or R.
12. Familiarity with econometric techniques used in evaluation, including power calculations and matching.

Personal Style:

13. Ability to work at a fast pace and to tight deadlines where appropriate.
14. Highly credible with a wide range of audiences including national and local system leaders, frontline staff, children and young people and their families, in articulating the case for reform to service design and delivery.
15. Natural collaborator, networker and convener who makes connections and brings others together.
16. Politically astute with sound judgement.

Initial Terms and Conditions of Appointment

- Remuneration: c.£35K pa dependent on experience
- Time Commitment: This is a full-time role.
- Location: Central London. Following government guidelines for working during COVID-19
- Term: Fixed term for twelve months.
- Other - This role reports to a senior member of the Research team.

Introduction to the Centre

About Us

What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) 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 “Researcher - Quantitative” in the Subject of the email.

Deadline for applications: 12pm 1st March 2021