



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

Senior Programmes
Manager
(Maternity Cover)

Candidate Brief

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the Senior Programmes Manager 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, 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 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 expect great things from What Works for Children's Social Care, which has been an independent body since March 2020.

Reporting to either the Director of Programmes or the Head of Education Programmes, this role will lead on the development and delivery of a number of priority programmes for the Centre.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Sanders

Chief Executive, What Works for Children's Social Care

The team

The Programmes team at What Works for Children's Social Care is responsible for the grant funding and commissioning, the team strives 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.

We aim to do this by using funding as a mechanism to support the creation of new research, a lever by which to influence the standard and priorities of research in the sector, and an incentive to others (individuals and organisations) to shift resources towards children's social care research. Our approach is broadly divided into two complementary strands: funding of projects (supporting organisations to deliver their interventions), and funding of evaluations (supporting researchers to determine the impact of these interventions on outcomes of interest).

The role

Programme management:

- Leading on the development and delivery of programmes, including working closely with external stakeholders to monitor performance against milestones and deliverable; this includes both programme delivery and evaluation activities.
- Managing programme specific budgets, risks and issues.
- Ensuring that evaluation methodology is adequately reviewed by the Research team and methodological issues addressed.
- Reviewing interim and final reports produced by delivery organisations and evaluators.
- Advising internal project teams on programme management including planning, partner management, monitoring, and reporting.
- Consulting with Practice, Policy and Communications teams to maximise dissemination and impact of our findings.
- Contributing to regular progress reporting for the Department for Education

Funding processes

- Managing assessment of applications and peer review

- Ensuring that decision-makers have all the information required in order to be able to make decisions about which projects to fund, and which evaluators to appoint.
- Contributing to the continuous improvement of WWCSO guidance, decision-making and grant management processes.

Other

- Line managing up to 1-3 Programme Managers
- Representing the organisation at external meetings and events.
- Managing Advisory Groups as needed; this could include determining membership, setting agendas and leading specific discussions in meetings.
- Other ad-hoc duties, as required.

The Person

- Personal commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people, and their families.
- A passion for the agenda of evidence based policy and practice in children's social care and the broader agenda around evidence-based policy and practice in public services.
- Able to work flexibly and adapt to shifting priorities.
- Confident working independently and as part of a small team.

Knowledge and Experience:

- Experience of programme management (E)
- Experience of commissioning and/or grant/contract management. (E)
- Knowledge of barriers to research in children's social care. (D)
- Familiarity with randomised controlled trials and other evaluation methodologies. (D)
- Experience of working in a fast-paced environment. (E)
- Previous line management experience (D)

Skills and Abilities:

- Ability to work effectively with a wide range of partner organisations
- Ability to prioritise competing demands
- Ability to work well as a team
- Highly organised and good attention to detail
- Excellent communicator, able to explain research to non-technical audiences

Initial Terms and Conditions of Appointment

What Works for Children's Social Care is looking to recruit a Senior Programmes Manager to work as part of a growing team, to support the delivery of existing programmes and the competitive funding of new research.

- **Remuneration:** £40-£50k
- **Time Commitment:** Full time role (37.5 hours per week)
- **Location:** Central London (some remote working possible). Travel around England may be required occasionally
- **Term:** June to January 2022 (maternity cover)
- **Other:** Reports to the Director of Programmes/ Head of Education Programmes
- Right to work in the UK. We are not able to sponsor work visa

Introduction to WWCS

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.

WWCS 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@workworks-csc.org.uk, citing "WWCSC Senior Programmes Manager" in the subject of the email.

Deadline for applications: 5pm 31st May 2021