London Borough of Bexley

Job Description

Job Title:  Deputy Director, Children’s Social Care

Reports to:  Director of Children’s Services

Purpose of the Job

To hold operational responsibility on a day to day basis across the whole local system for child and family social work practice, including all social work managers (practice supervisors), social workers (approved child and family practitioners) and social work assistants.

To lead and govern excellent professional practice, working collaboratively with council colleagues, locally elected members, partner agencies and voluntary sector leaders so that we provide the most effective help to children, young people, families and carers.

To model strong leadership as a member of the senior management team for children’s services, developing a clear strategy for excellent social work services that demonstrate the Council’s commitment to supporting families, protecting children and providing safe and stable childhoods for children in the public care.

To create the professional environment for outstanding social work to flourish and to ensure that the systems and processes required to practice effectively are in place.

To develop social work practitioners who excel in their work with children, families and carers and who are able to competently use ‘signs of safety’ as the basis of their practice.

To enable and support effective decision making about the families with whom we work, creating a culture where managed risk is accepted and understood as an integral part of every decision that we make.

To be a member of the core team leading and implementing our improvement plan, setting ambitious practice standards and instilling a strong sense of accountability in all staff for the impact of their work on the lives of children and families.

To model the Council’s values and standards in carrying out the responsibilities of this post, being a member of extended management board, leading our contribution to Strategy 2018 and the Corporate plan.

Key Accountabilities

To act as a senior lead on delivering the children and families aspects of the Council’s corporate outcomes and plan.

To be responsible for the effective discharge of the Council’s responsibilities in respect of early help, child protection, children in need, looked after children, permanence services, including adoption and fostering and support for care leavers.
To lead and oversee the implementation of Signs of Safety as Bexley’s practice framework for the help, protection and care of children and young people.

To provide appropriate and high quality support to key elected members to enable them to discharge their responsibilities in respect of local leadership, policy making, decision making and scrutiny.

To lead, inspire and empower all managers and practitioners to engage in high quality help and support for all families and children.

To take the strategic lead for children missing from home, care and education and those at risk of sexual exploitation, making sure that the system to protect these children and promote their welfare is secure and effective.

To co-direct the professional standards, quality assurance and workforce service, ensuring that our workforce strategy is effective in recruiting and retaining highly competent social workers who will be assessed as meeting the key knowledge and skill competencies when they are introduced.

To ensure that the performance and accountability cycle for children’s social care is underpinned by effective and reliable data that is understood and regularly considered by all managers within the service.

To ensure that services represent value for money for the Council, delivering within budget and reporting coherently to the expenditure board where there are exceptions or opportunities for savings and/or innovation which will deliver efficiencies.

To work collaboratively with key partner agencies, with particular regard to the police, health services and schools, to enable us all to work together to improve the collective impact of our work with families and children.

To work collaboratively with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that children’s social care is well represented and shares information effectively.

To be passionate about the value of well managed public services and to be able to be articulate and persuasive about the needs and aspirations of families living in Bexley.

To provide strategic advice and support to Members, Management Board and the Director of Children’s Services on the full range of issues associated with children’s social care.

To communicate with and to motivate children’s social care staff through regular briefings, professional guidance, support and development in accordance with the Council’s policies and procedures.

To ensure a high standard of management is developed and sustained and that services are well planned and performance managed, maintaining good work force discipline and staff development.

To ensure the Council’s commitments to fair, non-discriminatory and progressive personnel priorities are implemented.

To undertake such projects, initiatives and additional duties as are required to ensure the effective management and delivery of the Council’s services to families and children.

To support the Council in discharging its responsibility to report and account to Government and/or regulators in a timely way, paying explicit attention to the quality of our submissions.
**Person Specification**

**Job Title:** Deputy Director, Children’s Social Care

**KEY:**

A = Application Form  ASS = Assessment  I = Interview  DBS = DBS Clearance  DE = Documentary Evidence

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELECTION CRITERIA</th>
<th>ESSENTIAL/ DESIRABLE (E/D)</th>
<th>METHOD OF ASSESSMENT (see key )</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(a) Education and Formal Training</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree or equivalent level qualification.</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A DE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, Diploma in Social Work or equivalent.</td>
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<td>Professional registration with the health and care professions council.</td>
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<td><strong>(b) Relevant Technical Experience and Knowledge</strong></td>
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<td>Substantial experience in leading and developing a range of relevant services at second or third tier in a large public sector organisation.</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A, ASS, I</td>
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<td>Achievement of measurable results in an environment where political and financial issues impact on service delivery.</td>
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<td>Knowledge of major legislative, social and economic issues relevant to the role.</td>
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<td>Experience of working closely with colleagues supporting the education and/or health needs of children.</td>
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<td>Substantial experience advising and working alongside local politicians and with the formal decision making arrangements of Local Government.</td>
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<td>Model and support senior colleagues and leaders so that our vision of strengthening families and enabling them to stay together safely is realised.</td>
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## Key Knowledge and Skills

### Lead and govern

- Engage staff, children and families and wider partnerships in constructive thinking about the future, creating a shared strategic vision which inspires, motivates and encapsulates the organisational commitment to supporting families, protecting children and providing safe and stable childhoods for children in public care.

- Provide strategic leadership to the service, so that our improvement priorities are implemented well by managers and understood by practitioners in everyday practice.

- Create a culture in which excellent practice is expected and celebrated, critical incidents handled with grace and discipline, and public commitment to protecting children and supporting families is frequent and authentic.

- Prioritise the monitoring of budgets in order to manage demand and the quality of service provision. Confidently illustrate the relationship between efficiency, child outcome and financial flexibility so that services can respond to changing need and risk.

- Engage managers and practitioners in the full implementation of Signs of Safety, including co-sponsorship of the EiP2 Programme.

### Developing the environment for excellent professional practice

- Provide a safe, calm and well-ordered environment for all staff, ensuring that process is well considered, fit for purpose and efficient.

- Ensure that caseloads are well managed and that professional supervision is in place, enabling practitioners to consider and reflect upon practice decisions and next best steps.

- Create sufficient capacity for practitioners to build relationships with children and families and undertake effective direct work, which successfully reduces risks and enhances family wellbeing.

- Identify and develop people with emerging leadership talent, and support retention through the provision of challenging, interesting and motivating opportunities.

- Distribute leadership throughout the directorate and encourage alliances between colleagues so that they hold one another to account for the quality of practice.

- Use resources to best effect and have mechanisms in place to ensure constant reflective thinking about the safety of children and the welfare of families.

- Build influential and productive relationships across the organisation and the wider local partnership, across regions and nationwide, to secure the very best support to families and the protection of children.

- Establish communication channels which enable reports on the confidence of the service and be alert to anxiety and pressures among staff, even at the earliest stages.

- Secure high quality legal, financial and human resource services for the directorate.
| Effective use of power and authority | • Apply a proportionate and ethical approach to the exercise of authority, which develops and maintains relationships with families and professionals and ensures the protection of children.  
• Maximise opportunities for children and families to make informed choices.  
• Secure an up to date, working knowledge of relevant legislation, guidance and regulations, making sure that this is shared with managers who understand and can work in accordance with what is required.  
• Exercise statutory powers where social work assessments show that families require help and support and children are at risk of significant harm, ensuring that actions are proportionate to risk.  
• Support practitioners to communicate clearly, honestly and respectfully the purpose and content of the social work plan, even when this is likely to generate a hostile, angry or frightened response.  
• Recognise the patterns of relationships between professionals, identifying where these are likely to compromise the welfare of families and the safety of children, taking immediate and corrective action.  
• Invite challenge and debate and be accessible to children, families and professionals. |
| Analysis and decision-making | • Create a culture of focussed thinking which consistently explores a wide range of contexts (including family and professional stories, the chronology of critical events, social and economic circumstances).  
• Generate multiple hypotheses which make sense of the complexity in which children and families are living.  
• Help practitioners to make decisions based on these hypotheses, observations and analyses, taking account of the wishes and feelings of children and families.  
• Ensure that practitioners are ambitious for children and families and that the long-term and life-long consequences of decisions are fully considered at all stages of planning and review.  
• Ensure that children and young people’s expectations are met where possible and any disappointment sensitively acknowledged and sufficiently addressed.  
• Establish recording processes which provide the full analysis underpinning decisions, making sure the rationale for why and how decisions have been made is comprehensive and well expressed. |
| Performance Management, Improvement and Learning | • Develop and oversee an effective programme of supervision for all practitioners, regularly sampling and testing that it is effective and supporting high quality professional practice.  
• Recognise and articulate the dilemmas and challenges faced by practitioners.  
• Promote reflective thinking to drive more effective discussions so that reasoned and timely decision-making can take place. |
- Demonstrate a high level of resilience within pressured environments and respond in a calm, measured and pragmatic way.
- Oversee the management of our improvement priorities, making sure that the reports to the improvement partnership are accurate and well prepared.
- Explain to managers and practitioners the full legal, regulatory, procedural and performance framework within which they operate and be accountable for their work within it.
- Provide opportunities for staff to give and receive constructive feedback on performance.
- Recognise and commend hard work and excellent practice and build social work and managers’ confidence in their practice.
- Devise and implement systems which both demonstrate effective practice and trigger immediate corrective action where necessary.
- Oversee regularly the monthly managers’ reports, ensuring that all material for the performance board is properly prepared and scrutinised in advance.
- Implement a system whereby all corrective performance action can be and is taken once the performance data has been understood and discussed with managers.
- Oversee the new family feedback process, communicating regularly with children, young people, families and other professionals, inviting critical feedback and ideas for improvement.
- Respond thoughtfully and proactively to complaints and mistakes, creating learning opportunities for self, staff and the organisation.
- Set ambitious practice standards, instilling a strong sense of accountability in staff for the impact of their work on the lives of children and families.
- Establish rigorous, fair and transparent processes for managing the performance of staff, including accurate measures of practice through direct observation.

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<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Build and sustain effective working and professional partnerships with all statutory agencies, the safeguarding children board and corporate colleagues.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political awareness</td>
<td>Be vigilant about and sensitive to incidents and issues that may require political briefing. Work closely with the Director of Children’s Services and the Chief Executive to appropriately alert key members through the serious incident notification procedure.</td>
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<td>Effective decision making</td>
<td>Create a culture where managed risk is accepted and understood as a key aspect of all decisions that are made.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage practitioners to take decisions in this context and make sure they know they have the backing of the organisation to do so.</td>
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• Actively cultivate trust among staff and develop a culture which promotes learning, reflection and the acceptance of accountability.

• Acknowledge the enormity of separating a child from their parents, adding discipline to decision-making about children coming into the public care returning home or to extended family, or moving to new permanent families.

• Ensure that the long-term consequences of decisions are properly explored and understood.

• Make sound and complex decisions under high pressured, fast paced conditions, striking a balance between speed and depth of thought.

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<tr>
<th>Innovative and creative thinking</th>
<th>Be prepared to undertake and engage in new and different ways of delivering children’s social care services, being willing to learn from others and being open-minded to new and different possibilities and service models.</th>
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| Understanding Regulatory Requirements | Be familiar with and able to accurately assess our performance against current inspection criteria.  
• Interact regularly with our Annexe A inspection data, making reports every quarter to senior management team. |