



LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES DEPARTMENT
JOB DESCRIPTION

POST TITLE: Independent Reviewing Officer and Conference Chair

Grade: ME16

DEPARTMENT: Children's, Schools & Families (CSF)

Section: Quality Assurance & Practice Development

Responsible to: Quality Assurance Manager IRO & Chairs

Responsible for: 1 Admin Assistant

Post number:

Date: October 2014

Overall Purpose of the Job

1. Chairing independently initial and review child protection conferences, children looked after reviews, strategy meetings and disruption meetings.
2. Provision of professional consultancy, guidance and expert professional advice to managers and practitioners.
3. Monitoring, developing and promoting consistently high practice standards in the implementation and interpretation of child protection; looked after children and child in need statutory policy, guidance and procedure.
4. Ensuring that all child protection initial and review conferences and looked after reviews are within the statutory time limits and conform to statutory guidelines.
5. Responsible for ensuring the continuous improvement in standards of practice in relation to child protection, child in need and looked after children within a Performance Improvement Strategy.
6. In line with the IRO Handbook and through the local dispute resolution process, ensure that children's plans are timely, of the highest quality and in the best

interests of children and young people. This includes, when required, entering into the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) and resolving and/or escalating concerns about the quality of services provided to children and young people to the highest level including the Children's Director, the Chief Executive of the Local Authority and to CAFCASS in line with the chapter 6 of the IRO Handbook.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- To be accountable for decision making in looked after reviews and other multi agency fora
- To convene and record review outcomes in the electronic system within timescales
- To monitor the performance of the local authority in relation to the child's case and the authority's statutory role in this regard
- To work constructively with senior managers, offering a critical perspective and appropriate challenge;
- To provide a key role and represent the council in problem resolution.
- To work with complaints officers, and advocates, where necessary, for the resolution of a problem for a child or family where the local authority or other services are not meeting their needs.
- To undertake duties in accordance with the IRO Handbook.
- To promote practice that acknowledges that becoming looked after is a final option for children and that the majority of children do best when safely supported to do so within their family of origin
- To promote and model practice that is respectful of children and of parents, and takes full account of their views, rights and responsibilities.
- To identify, record and escalate concerns in relation to planning and achieving outcomes for children looked after to the required level including Cafcass through the local dispute resolution process.
- To be responsible for recommending action regarding the safety of children looked after placed with parents.
- To represent the department at local practice based fora.
- To contribute, at the request of the team manager or the service manager to internal and inter agency planning groups and meetings with regard to planning and development of services for children.
- To support the monitoring, development and maintenance of local quality assurance systems.

- To liaise with operational staff and managers to ensure proactive implementation of decisions from looked after children's reviews and child protection conferences.
- To undertake audits and evaluation of looked after children work, contributing to cross cutting audits as appropriate.
- To closely monitor the integrity of the electronic system and Performance related data
- To undertake all related administrative tasks involved in providing and monitoring the decisions and practices related to looked after children's planning to ensure that targets are met.
- To report to the Quality Assurance Service Manager and the IRO Manager any shortfalls in performance or service delivery, and to actively seek to rectify such shortfalls
- To actively seek out opportunities for collaborative working with other agencies in the interests of improved planning and service delivery for children.

b) Budgetary Responsibilities

- To be aware of both Departmental and Divisional resource availability while applying the principles of best value to decision making in relation to children looked after reviews and child protection conferences and other planning fora for children.
- To maintain a professional knowledge of the division's/directorate's/council's financial position
- To alert the Quality Assurance Service Manager and the IRO Manager to any predicted budgetary pressures arising from specific plans for children, or to any potential cost savings.
- All Social Work staff are required to adhere to the appropriate professional standards, including those framed by the PCF (owned by The College of Social Work) and the HCPC professional standards for social workers

The duties and responsibilities outlined in this job description (for all grades) are indicative of the role(s); however they are not exhaustive and may be subject to change. In addition, you will be required to undertake other reasonable duties as directed by your manager.



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PERSON SPECIFICATION

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Qualifications & Knowledge Required

- a. Social Work Qualification (Masters in Social Work or Social Work BA/BSc, Diploma in Social Work, CQSW)
- b. Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council Standards (HCPC)
- c. Sound knowledge and understanding of current legislation, guidance and research in relation to all aspects of work with children and their families, particularly in relation to child protection and looked after children
- d. Able to communicate effectively with children and young people and respond to their needs, wishes and desires
- e. Sound understanding of the Independent Reviewing Officer Handbook, the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and the Cafcass Protocol in relation to court proceedings and requirements
- f. Sound knowledge of current policy and practice issues in respect of children's services.
- g. Significant understanding of issues faced by families from minority ethnic communities, or other minority groups.
- h. Experience of the principles of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, Adoption, Children's Homes and Residential Special Schools
- i. Experience of working effectively from an interagency perspective ensuring effective planning for children and effective communication and outcomes
- j. Significant practice experience in children's social work including looked after children and child protection.

- k. Previous experience of managing children's social care practice.
- l. Experience of supervising and managing children's social work practice, including child protection and looked after children
- m. Experience of providing consultation and advice to social services and other agencies' staff, on issues of care planning for looked after children and safeguarding issues.