

Kent County Council

Job Description: *Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)*

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| Directorate: | Children, Young People and Education |
| Unit/Section: | Safeguarding |
| Grade: | KR12 |
| Responsible to: | QA Team Manager |

Purpose of the Job:

As an authoritative professional, the Independent Reviewing Officer is required to act as Independent Chair at statutory review meetings for Looked after Children with the accountability for ensuring that the correct decisions and recommendations are made when planning, regulating and providing guidance in the formulation and review of individual care plans. To challenge the effectiveness and quality of service decisions where necessary to fulfil an agreed care plan and to use statutory powers to escalate to senior management and an external judicial arena where appropriate.

The role is required to champion social work values by contributing to the continuous development and improvement of standards and outcomes for Children in Care, ensuring high quality social work intervention for those in need of protection. This will be achieved through applying the agreed model of intervention, multi-agency collaboration, and focusing on the wider safeguarding agenda for Kent. Thus ensuring that legislative and statutory obligations, specifically those outlined in the IRO Handbook, directorate procedures and quality assurance are met and provided and that Kent fulfils its responsibilities as the Corporate Parent.

Main duties and responsibilities:

- Chair multi-agency Care Plan Review Meetings for Children in Care according to County priorities, maintaining an independent perspective in conjunction with Service and Team Managers, to ensure that Care Plans are set out and followed through, and that each child is reviewed in accordance with statutory obligations. Additionally, when required, chair initial Child in Need Reviews, Child Protection Conferences and complex strategy meetings as part of the combined IRO/CP Chair service.
- Required to contribute to the support and robust challenge in the formulation, monitoring and review of care plans for Children in Care. Advising on improvements in order to ensure that they are in line with the required standard. The role will require the post holder to have a high-level understanding of all relevant internal policies, an awareness of relevant legislation and partnership working skills to assist senior management in the strategic development of ongoing service delivery

- Develop, enhance and maintain excellent working relationships with key/core statutory partners, locality specific service providers, stakeholders, multi-agencies (e.g. Health, Police, Education) and the wider community, to develop joint planning and delivery mechanisms thus ensuring that positive outcomes are secured for young people and corporate parenting is fully understood.
- To lead and participate in case audits on the quality of child care work, analysing and challenging practice, identifying gaps and developing strategies for addressing shortfalls.
- Accountable for maintaining an allocated case load of looked after children, rigorously monitoring and tracking individual care plans and permanency plans and implement the conflict resolution procedure where necessary. Accountable for ensuring the tracking database is maintained in order to track the progress of Children in Care regarding their Care Plans, and robustly raise issues in accordance with the conflict resolution protocols, national standards, legislation, county and directorate policies.
- Contribute to the design and delivery of the annual Business Plan, identifying agreed targets and outcomes and mechanisms for effective service delivery and performance indicator standards to ensure consistent high-quality service. Alongside having accountability for the development of policy and practice to ensure that the service as a whole responds to new and emerging changes to statutory guidance and best practice standards. To lead on specific projects for the improvement of child care planning.
- To contribute to the formulation, development and delivery of departmental and interagency strategy, policy and training regarding looked after children.
- Accountable for the delivery of training for Integrated Children's Services and other KCC staff as well as staff from other agencies involved with Children in Care matters, to ensure that they are fully aware of child in care issues and procedures.
- Respond to situations of crisis and emergency by coordinating service provision with internal and external partners.

Footnote: This job description is provided to assist the job holder to know what their main duties are. It may be amended from time to time without change to the level of responsibility appropriate to the grade of post.

Organisational Responsibilities

All corporate directors, directors and senior managers have an explicit responsibility to deliver the collective agenda of the Council. These are fundamental elements of their role not an addition and are summarised as follows:

Whole Council

- Seek to improve the lives of all residents in Kent and economy of Kent
- Act as corporate parent to the Council's looked after children
- Take an active role in promoting and ensuring the Council's responsibilities for safeguarding are met.
- Understand, communicate and contribute to the delivery of KCC's strategic aims
- Meet statutory obligations and promote and ensure compliance with policies and procedures and the Council's Code of Conduct (Kent Code).
- Advise elected members and support the democratic process
- Promote the Council brand and enhance the overall reputation of the Council
- Understand and monitor the measures of performance, including customer insight, which define successful outcomes for KCC services
- Maintain and ensure a relentless focus on the customer
- Act to support the Council-wide need to deliver services within budget, thereby avoiding an overspend that could damage the financial viability of the Council
- Overcome professional and service silos to achieve the County Council's objectives.

Integration of Services

- Focus resources where they have the biggest impact
- Deliver services that are flexible and adaptable
- Integrate services within KCC and work with partner agencies to ensure a seamless customer experience
- Fully and inclusively engage all staff in the delivery of services, demonstrating the Council's leadership values and competencies.

Embedding Commissioning and Engaging relevant markets

- Establish an outcome focused organisation
- Meet the financial regulations and standing orders of KCC
- Challenge the status quo and engage with the market to constantly improve
- Ensure all services are delivered effectively and efficiently
- Proactively and continuously seek to improve service delivery
- Proactively manage risk to avoid inertia whilst not exposing the Council to needless and avoidable challenge or loss

Managing Change

- Understand and support the Authority's overall change agenda
- Deliver required outcomes of service specific change on time and to budget
- Understand the quality of staff, support their development, nurture those with talent
 - Identify the skills for the future and the level of staff through robust workforce planning
- Identify and deal with underperformance.
- Deliver to agreed budget and income targets.

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Person Specification: *Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)*

The following outlines the criteria for this post. Applicants who have a disability and who meet the criteria will be shortlisted.

Applicants should describe in their application how they meet these criteria.

| | CRITERIA |
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| QUALIFICATIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognised Social Work qualification - Degree in Social Work, CQSW, DiPSW, CSS Child Care award• Registration as a Social Worker with Social Work England• Evidence of continuous professional and management development• A Full UK Driving Licence – The Council is committed to making reasonable adjustments so whilst this job requires the jobholder to drive your application will still be considered if you are unable to drive due to a disability. |
| EXPERIENCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substantial post qualifying experience gained from working within a front-line children and families team at team leader/practice supervisor level or equivalent including: Undertaking complex assessments of a child's needs and/or risk. Designing and implementing care/protection plans. Monitoring and reviewing such plans over a period of time. Providing social work supervision and support• Experience of chairing complex meetings including strategy meetings• Experience of working closely in partnership with key internal and external partners and across agencies to deliver successful outcomes |
| SKILLS AND ABILITIES | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to establish positive and effective working relationships with children, young people, and families to ascertain their wishes and feelings, and engage with them in decision making processes• Excellent negotiating, influencing and interpersonal skills including the ability to offer consultations on complex issues and deal with conflict, hostility, and vulnerability• Ability to challenge assertively and offer a critical perspective whilst maintaining professional integrity and deliver difficult messages with sensitivity |
| KNOWLEDGE | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive knowledge of English childcare legislation, childcare practice & legislation and a solid understanding of how this relates to looked after children and the role of the IRO and the most up to date IRO Handbook• A thorough understanding of the legal framework relating to looked after children and care leavers, including knowledge of National Minimum Standards 6 and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005• Knowledge of various models of intervention and KCC's preferred and agreed model of intervention |

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| KENT VALUES AND CULTURAL ATTRIBUTES | <p>Kent Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are brave. We do the right thing, we accept and offer challenge• We are curious to innovate and improve• We are compassionate, understanding and respectful to all• We are strong together by sharing knowledge• We are all responsible for the difference we make <p>Our values enable us to build a culture that is:</p> <p>Flexible/agile - willing to take (calculated) risks and want people that are flexible and agile</p> <p>Curious - constantly learning and evolving</p> <p>Compassionate and Inclusive - compassionate, understanding and respectful to all</p> <p>Working Together - building and delivering for the best interests of Kent</p> <p>Empowering - Our people take accountability for their decisions and actions</p> <p>Externally Focused - Residents, families and communities at the heart of decision making</p> |
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