The Highland Council

Job title: Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officer

Grade and Salary: HC10: £51,506 - £56,329

Location: Various across Highland

Responsible to: Principal Officer- Social Care

Background:

The Highland Council is required to ensure that:

All Looked after and Accommodated Children (LAAC) and all Children subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order living at Home (LAC) have a clear care plan to meet their needs which is reviewed at the required intervals.

All children subject to child protection investigations and referred to Child Protection Planning meetings have a comprehensive, multi-agency risk assessment, and that if placed on the Child Protection Register the child has a child protection plan that is reviewed no less than six monthly intervals. The above to be carried out in accordance with the following as appropriate:

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Looked After Children (Scotland Regulations) 2009
- Guidance on Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007
- Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011
- Legislation, policy and guardianship regarding unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people.
- Equality Act 2010
- UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024
- Care and Risk Management Approach- Highland 2024
- UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024
- Better Meetings Guide 2024 (Highland and Moray)
- Getting it Right for Every Child and Young Person in Highland: Interagency Practice Guidance and Child Protection Procedures 2024
- The principles of The Promise Scotland 2020
- Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland 2024
- Relevant Departmental Procedures including Kinship Care and Continuing Care
- Vulnerable Pregnancy Pathway- Highland 2021

Job Purpose:

The role of the Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officer (QARO) within the QARO and wider Principal Officer's team is to conduct the review process by:

- Taking a lead role in chairing LAAC, LAC review meetings and Child Protection Planning Meetings.
- Ensuring the child is at the centre of all LAAC, LAC and Child Protection meetings.
- Supporting the participation of the child and their family.
- Facilitating the discussion and participation of all attendees.
- Ensuring that the review meeting agrees a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timeous) Child's Plan that ensures the child's safety and well-being.
- Ensuring that the plan is reviewed within required timescales
- Ensuring quality standards as defined are met through key performance indicators and where, they are not met, exception reports are provided to relevant senior managers.

In managing the review process the QARO will ensure the aims of the service in relation to Looked After Children are observed, including:

- Maintaining children in their community when this can be achieved safely.
- Where a child becomes looked after and accommodated by the local authority, reunifying the child to his/her/their family of origin where this can be achieved safely.
- Highland's Family First approach.
- Where reunification is not viable, timeously securing permanent or long-term alternative care.

Major tasks/job activities

<u>Chair LAAC and LAC Reviews/ Child Protection Planning Meetings</u>

- Convene and chair statutory review meetings for LAAC and LAC in accordance with legislation.
- Facilitate and promote the attendance and participation, at Child Plan Meetings and Child Protection Planning Meetings, of children, young people and parents and ensure that their views are shared and heard.
- Convene and chair Initial, Unborn, Review and transfer Child Protection Planning meetings.
- Chair identified hospital discharge meetings.
- Chair LAAC young people in secure care.
- Facilitate and promote the attendance and participation at reviews/ planning meetings of children, young people and their families and carers and ensure that their views are heard, shared and incorporated into their Child's Plan.
- Provide competent, sensitive and consistent chairing of meetings.

Quality Assurance

For each Child's Plan ensure the undernoted are actioned within required timescales by the relevant professional:

- A family first approach that ensures the needs of the individual child is fully considered alongside any siblings and the family. That consistency is applied to the management of sibling cases.
- Ensure that agreed resources from partner agencies are recorded, monitored and reported with management.
- The Child's Plan fully reflects the needs and views of the child, is up to date and shared within timescales in advance of meetings. That Child's Plans include previous review outcomes and documents clear analysis and action plan to address assessed need and risk.
- Full and accurate Action records and minutes are produced and shared. This includes Child Friendly versions to ensure children understand their plan.
- Escalate issues to Social Workers/ Practice Leads/ Principal Officer and Children's Services Managers, including partner agencies using the Escalation Procedure
- Monitor the quality, competency and effectiveness of social work and other professionals reporting to the Principal Officer- Social Care.
- Ensure that unmet needs in service delivery are recorded, collated and reported with management.
- Ensure recording of reason and authorisation when LAC, LAAC and CPPM's are held outwith statutory timescales.
- Raise concerns regarding practice with relevant managers.
- Participate in regular audits within the QARO team and the wider service, using agreed tools (eg the Care Inspectorate), learning from findings with a focus on practice improvement.

Support the delivery and development of the service:

- Participate in working/ implementation/ steering/ collaborative groups including Better Meetings, All About Me, Securing Childrens Futures, Comraich, The Promise language sub-group etc.
- Contribute to the creation and development of a multi-agency Child's Plans with colleagues.
- Support Health and Social Care colleagues in their understanding of the quality assurance and reviewing processes and their role within this through briefings, induction and training.
- Develop knowledge of suitable resources for children, young people and families within Highland and nationally and share with colleagues.
- Contribute to the delivery and design of pilots and strategic planning.
- Contribute to planning and policy/ procedure development as required.
- Devise and suggest service improvements and contribute to the development of the team plan.
- Contribute to planning and policy development as required.

- Through quality assurance and improvement planning, contribute to the achievement of a high quality of service that meets local and national standards within national legislation, regulations and guidance.

Decisions made:

LAC and LAAC reviews

Based on professional assessment, knowledge and experience recommend the need for:

- Changes to the Child's Plan
- Permanency planning
- Appropriate risk assessment and management within care plans.

CPPM's

Direct the decision- making process at every CPPM to encompass:

- The child, young person and families views and wishes.
- The child's lived experience.
- A clearly articulated basis for the registration of a child, referral to the Children's Reporter, or other legal intervention measures.
- The establishment of a Core Group to act as partners to the Child taking forward child protection plans and specify agency responsibilities.
- Making the deciding recommendation when consensus is not gained and providing clear analysis for decision making.
- Initiation of emergency protection measures when appropriate.
- Lead discussion to alternative care arrangements when a child or young person is in an unacceptable level of risk.
- Appropriate risk assessment and management within plans.

All:

- Monitor standards of assessment, report writing, practice, decision-making and care planning. Recommend improvement in both individual cases through to Learning Reviews.
- Follow up and/ or escalate identified issues such as service need, implementation of a Child's Plan or inadequate progression of a permanency decision.

Other duties:

- The QARO may be required to undertake any other duties appropriate to the level of the post.
- Duties and responsibilities may vary from time to time.

Responsible for:

QARO's do not have responsibility for direct line management of staff. QARO's model/ mentor and coach the Health and Social Care workforce. QARO's demonstrate good practice and

listening and understanding skills to the wider workforce, building participation and engagement capacity.

Experience required:

- A relevant professional qualification in Social Work at degree level.
- Registration (or ability to) on the SSSC register as a Social Worker.
- Postgraduate Certificate in Child Welfare and Protection (or commitment to undertake this course)
- Four years post qualifying experience with at least two years in practice in a setting involving assessment and planning for LAC, LAAC and/ or children at risk of harm and/ or interagency support plans. Enhanced experience of child protection and permanency planning underpinned by a sound knowledge of theory and legislation.
- The ability to organise workload and manage time effectively.
- Ability to work autonomously and as part of a team.
- Enhanced assessment and analytical skills.
- IT skills.
- Ability to travel efficiently and effectively between various work locations within Highland to meet the operational requirements of the service.
- Highly developed communication and leadership skills and the ability to take the effective lead of professional practice and care planning review on a multi-agency basis.
- Demonstrate ability to exert professional authority over other parties and more senior colleagues, in an appropriate manner, when required in the best interests of the child/ young people.

Louise Smith

Principal Officer- Social Care

March 2025