

Family Rights Group

Lifelong Links Development Officer

Job Profile, Responsibilities and Person Specification

Post Title:	Lifelong Links Development Officer
Hours:	Full time (35 hours per week)
Responsible to:	Lifelong Links Project Director
Grading/Salary:	NJC PO4 - £36,379 to £39,177 (plus £3,650 weighting allowance if working in London) and 5% pension contribution
Contract:	Three year fixed term contract
Leave:	27 days per year (increasing to 30 days) + Bank Holidays

Job Profile

The aim of Lifelong Links is to create a lasting support network for children and young people in the care system for whom there is no plan for them to live within their family or be adopted.

The Lifelong Links approach draws upon a combination of a family finding model, which originated in the United States and the family group conference model, which originated in New Zealand. The aim is to identify and engage relatives and other supportive adults, who are estranged from, or not yet known to, a child who is in the care system, especially those who are willing to make a lasting commitment to him/her.

The premise of the approach is valuing continuity and permanence of relationships (be it with relatives or others connected to the child e.g. former foster carers or teachers) that offer ongoing support, provide an explanation of historical events and reinforce identity and a sense of belonging for the young person. The Lifelong Links model includes tools and techniques for professionals to use to search for and find family members and other adults who care about the child. This network is then brought together in a family group conference (FGC) to make a life-long support plan with, and for, the young person, which should be integrated into their care and pathway plans.

Family Rights Group has been working with a number of local authorities and other stakeholders, including young people in care, their families, foster carers and social workers to develop the UK Lifelong Links model. We are now undertaking a 3 year independently evaluated trial of Lifelong Links, funded by the Department for Education Innovation Programme, initially in seven localities in England (Devon, Hertfordshire, Kent and North Yorkshire County Councils, London Boroughs of Camden and Southwark and Coventry). We are separately seeking funding to trial the approach in Scotland.

The trial will be aimed at children and young people aged under 16 years who have entered care within the last two years.

Your role will be to support these localities to fully participate in the trial and then help roll out Lifelong Links to other interested local authorities and related organisations willing to introduce and sustain a Lifelong Links service.

You will be based in our office in Dalston, London although we will consider home working if you live outside London. You will be expected to travel regularly to some of the trial sites.

Job Description

Key Responsibilities

Working closely with the Lifelong Links Project Director and Lifelong Links Project Developer, you will be responsible for supporting the trial sites to effectively implement Lifelong Links. You will provide a coaching function to the sites, deliver training and help the authorities to fulfil the project requirements. This will include but not be limited to:

- Sitting on and contributing to local Lifelong Links implementation and practice development groups;
- Assisting authorities to determine referral criteria and embed Lifelong Links into their local procedures and policies;
- Working with the trial sites to support them in meeting the requirements for the evaluation of Lifelong Links and any other reporting requirements.
- Running training courses for Lifelong Links co-ordinators;
- Running training and briefing sessions for social workers making referrals to Lifelong Links;
- Promoting Lifelong Links including running awareness-raising sessions to a range of stakeholders and audiences;
- Working with the trial sites to develop and implement an effective communications strategy in order to promote internal 'buy in' and generate wider interest in Lifelong Links.
- Producing and/or co-producing materials for a range of audiences;
- Ensuring that children and young people in care, parents, foster carers, social workers and other key stakeholders are engaged in developing and promoting Lifelong Links, and supporting the setting up or sustainability of service user forums.

In addition you will:

- Work with the Project Developer to develop and promote quality standards including accreditation of Lifelong Links projects;
- Seek opportunities to run, help organize, speak at or undertake other activities to promote Lifelong Links;
- Convene and facilitate practice learning sets involving a cluster of Lifelong Links trial sites – and then extend this during the trial to other interested local authorities.
- Support the development of a national FGC and Lifelong Links network;
- Advise and help assess the readiness of other authorities to join the trial;
- Contribute to the development of a sustainable business plan to promote the rollout of Lifelong Links throughout the UK.
- Project manage the work locally in collaboration with participating local authorities, contribute to monitoring reports for funders and undertake work as required and ensure that this is done within agreed time-scales.
- Contribute to project-related publications (including guides, training packs and books).
- Participate in the Lifelong Links Steering group and the UK wide Practice Development Group.
- Where appropriate contribute to FRG projects which are the responsibility of other policy staff.

General Responsibilities

- To contribute and participate in FRG's work in promoting strength based practices with families
- To establish and maintain contacts with other relevant organisations.
- To keep abreast of developments concerning the child welfare legal and policy framework and other policy and practice developments that relates to FGC and Lifelong Links work.
- To ensure that the work responds to the experience and views of children and families involved with children's social care services.
- To ensure that all services are delivered in line with the organisation's equal opportunities policy.
- To undertake any other tasks as requested by the Chief Executive which are broadly compatible with the remit of the post.

Management and supervision

- You will be line managed by the Lifelong Links Project Director and will receive supervision from her.
- You will also participate in project development meetings involving all FRG team members involved in this work and quarterly all staff meetings. This will involve travel to different parts of the UK.

Person Specification

1. Professional qualifications, knowledge and experience

- You will be an experienced family group conference co-ordinator/manager **and/or**
- You will be qualified as a social worker with post qualifying experience as a senior practitioner or manager of children and families work.
- Significant experience of family group conferences.
- Experience of working directly with young people and with families.
- Experience of developing and delivering training and awareness raising sessions to social workers and other stakeholders.
- Excellent understanding of the child welfare legal and policy framework and procedures.

2. Anti-Discriminatory Practice

You will be able to demonstrate and apply a knowledge and understanding of the way in which discrimination impacts on families, including minority ethnic families, asylum seeking families and disabled parents.

3. Project Management

- Able to work independently and to manage work according to the project timetable and key milestones.
- Able to liaise with external agencies who are participants in the project and other partner agencies working with Family Rights Group.
- Able to ensure that funds are spent as agreed with the funders and that any project work undertaken is completed within the allocated budget.
- Able to demonstrate knowledge and experience of the principles and practice of supporting service user participation.

- You will be competent at working within an equalities framework.
- Proven experience of being an excellent team worker.

4. Training

- Able to develop and deliver training courses for a wide range of participants.
- Experience of writing and preparing training materials (desirable).

5. Communication Skills

- Able to develop positive relationships with people from a range of organisations and backgrounds.
- Able to work with and promote the interests of children, young people and families.
- Able to represent Family Rights Group by presenting and discussing the organisation's work to a variety of audiences, including practitioners, senior managers and policy makers.
- Able to communicate clearly, verbally and in writing, to both professional and non-professional audiences.
- Experience of preparing clear written reports and verbal presentations.

6. Self-Management

- Highly motivated and able to organise own work. You will be skilled in handling a busy workload, meeting deadlines and managing conflicting priorities.

7. IT

- You will have good IT skills and a willingness to develop these as required by the post.

8. Other Requirements

- You will have an understanding of and commitment to the aims of the organisation.
- You will be able to travel in the UK and stay away from home overnight occasionally and attend some early morning/late evening meetings, with sufficient notice.