

JOB DESCRIPTION & PERSON SPECIFICATION

Director Area: Children's Services	Job Ref Number: 03299
Service Area: Strategic Commissioning Team	Grade: G6
Job Title: Placement Support Officer	

PURPOSE OF JOB:
To work in the Children's Strategic Commissioning Service's placement team and provide high quality commissioning support in sourcing appropriate placements for children and young people from independent and non-maintained providers. Placements can be made both within Lincolnshire and throughout the United Kingdom where required. This role plays a key part in helping the Council meet statutory obligations in particular for Children in Care and for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Placement Support Officers work across ten different placement strands, this is subject to change:

- Independent Residential Care
- Independent Foster Care
- Independent and Non-Maintained (Special) Schools
- Intense Needs Supported Accommodation
- Youth Housing
- Post-16 Education
- Un-accompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- Alternative Provision
- Domiciliary Care
- Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities

Placement Support Officers must have an excellent knowledge and understanding of these placement strands, their interdependencies and the provider market place.

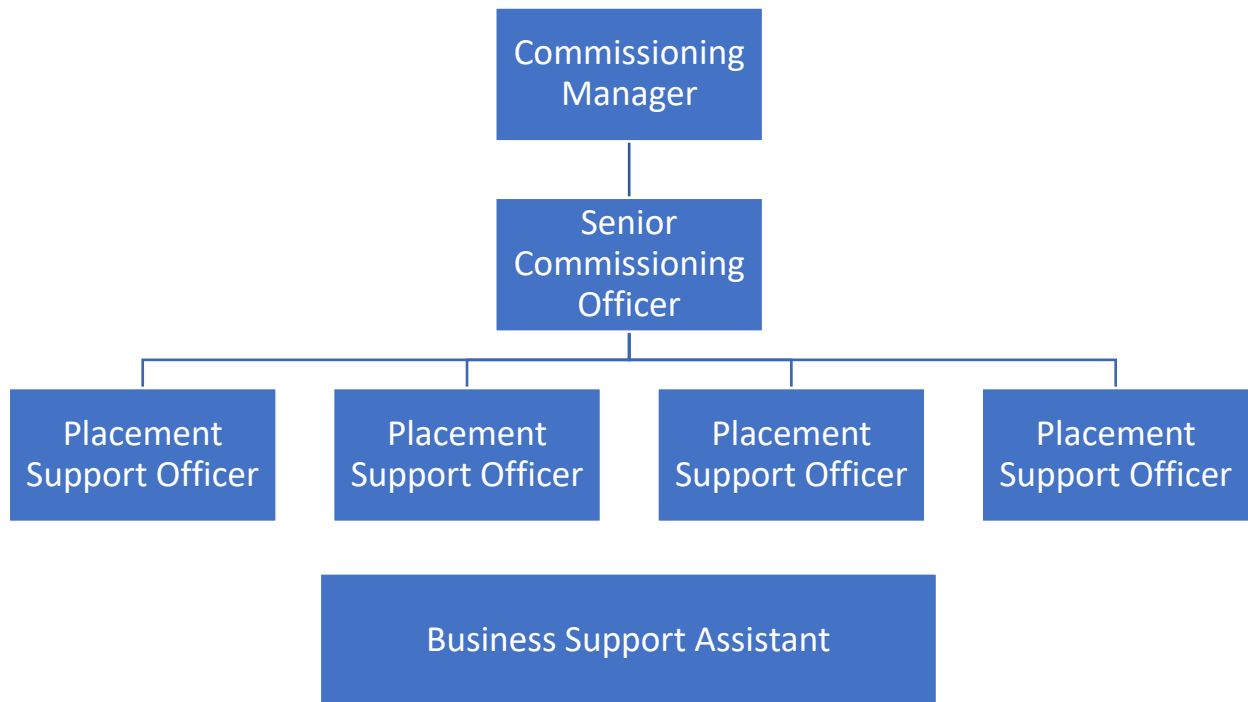
The placements function is a business critical service for Children's Services, requiring significant responsibility and urgency of deadlines.

This role will support the wider Strategic Commissioning Team through undertaking integrated commissioning activities across the full breadth of the commissioning cycle to include duties and responsibilities around:

- supporting the contract management and contract assurance processes
- quality assurance, monitoring and review of services and Providers
- supporting/ market engagement activities, including events
- performance analysis and desktop data analysis,
- day-to-day management of the placements brokerage function and responsibility for the development of contractual documentation.

This role will contribute to the delivery of outcomes in line with commissioning strategies, embedding new ways of thinking and working, as well as developing and maintaining strong, positive working relationships across service areas, with Providers and Partners.

This role will assist with the delivery of a consistent strategic commissioning approach across the Council, continuously looking for opportunities to implement synergies and achieve efficiency savings.

TEAM STRUCTURE:**MAIN DUTIES:**

1	Responsibility for the day to day running and operational management of the Children's Services placements team brokerage function. Co-ordinating the workload and placement requests to ensure that all duties and tasks are carried out to a high standard and completed within timescales. Whilst not directly line managing the Business Support Assistant, this role will be required to give direction, support and training to this assistant and will have the responsibility to ensure appropriate work tasks are allocated to them to support the placements function.
2	Liaison with senior officers and management on a daily basis, playing an instrumental role in sourcing placements for children and young people with complex needs in very tight timescales, in an often pressured environment; where there are emergency placements required and often at the direction of the courts, this can mean sourcing complex placements in a matter of hours, on the same day as the request is received; excellent communication and skills in negotiation are key for this part of the role.
3	Successfully identify, prioritise, source and confirm suitable placements for children and young people with Providers within often tight timescales, maintaining positive relationships within a highly competitive market. Liaising and working with senior managers, heads of service and directors to request authorisation and provide documentation for placements, ensuring compliance with the Council's Contract Procurement Procedure Rules.
4	Source suitable placements within relevant timescales (often within 24 hours) and within relevant pre-established criteria. Failure to do so will result in LCC not meeting statutory responsibilities and could have an impact on children and young people's health, safety, wellbeing and life chances, and the ability to deliver other services/interventions. Sourcing placements in a limited market place requires the ability to build and sustain professional and trusted relationships with external Providers to be able work creatively with them and service areas to source appropriate placements for Lincolnshire Children and Young People.
5	Provide recommendations to senior officers and managers around next steps and other options (after the process has been exhausted) as part of regular placement updates,

	<p>which requires an in-depth level of knowledge and understanding of all strands of placement and their relationship and interdependencies on one another, as well as the ability to put this information across to others, explaining options and potential repercussions. Using this experience and knowledge of recurring individual cases, allows Placement Support Officers to inform senior officers and managers on best options.</p>
6	<p>Using their knowledge and experience, consider the complex nature of the children and young people requiring support and then using discretion and knowledge, make low level decisions with set guidelines- for example, setting the right timescales for Supplier responses in each referral and prioritising workloads.</p>
7	<p>Responsibility for the sourcing of independent placements from end-to-end; from initial contact for the referral through to the completion of the relevant documentation to protect the Council and meet contractual obligations; using their experience, knowledge and creativity to directly support service areas, under their own autonomy and as required, to amend referrals, ensuring the right level of detail and information is supplied to the market to yield the best available placement opportunities for the child or young person.</p>
8	<p>Carrying out external open market searches by contacting all approved Providers, collating the responses and liaising directly with frontline workers and external Providers to ensure suitable placements are sourced in a timely manner, whilst promoting value for money. Where no placement offers are received, directly contact Provider managers and using use their persuasive and negotiation skills, look to discuss creative solutions to secure placements for some of Lincolnshire's most vulnerable children and young people. This aspect of the role requires the Placement Support Officers to have a detailed knowledge of all strands to be able to suggest a number of alternatives that may be suitable and then feed this information back to service managers internally to create a resolution. The outcome of such conversations is often complex and will require the Placement Support Officers to offer advice and guidance to both the Provider and Service Area.</p>
9	<p>Responsibility for the oversight of the different placement strands; each with their own individual but interdependent processes. The placements team are responsible for following and managing required processes in relation to one another to prevent any negative impact on Children's Services as a whole. The Placement Support Officers will also be responsible for the compliance oversight of the Providers for these strands; ensuring that signed contractual documentation is obtained, the relevant policies, procedures and insurances are in place and that the contract self-assessments are completed.</p>
10	<p>Prioritising individual work load in collaboration with the rest of the Placements team and supporting and directing the work of the Business Support Assistant. Managing the function as a whole and making decisions within set processes, referring decision outside the framework to senior management.</p>
11	<p>Responsible for urgent, same day placements into the different streams whilst continuously managing other planned placements and routine day-to-day tasks. The team are responsible for an active caseload of approximately 10-25 placements a weeks, up to 5 new placements coming into the team daily depending on the needs of the service areas. The caseload is hugely varied across the ten strands and require the Placement Support Officers to have a knowledge and understanding of a number of service areas, such as the Children in Care team and the processes/regulations surrounding this, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team (SEND) and the processes underpinned by the SEND code of conduct and the working practices of the Children With Disabilities (CWD).</p>
12	<p>Providing regular performance information reports to DLT and SLT with regard to all placement activity, including data and analysis, budget updates and forecast data, regulatory ratings, to demonstrate value for money and provide quality assurance.</p>

13	Responsible for the finance function and all finance related tasks for the placements strands, including the raising requisitions for purchase orders, checking and paying invoices against the INM workbook and directly dealing with all Supplier disputes. Placement Support Officers will also be required to work closely with Finance Managers to support their forecasting and management of the Children Services budget in relation to Independent Placement activity.
14	To support the contract management and assurance functions within the wider Strategic Commissioning Team including collating and analysing Provider's compliance and contractual requirements e.g. Section 11 and Safeguarding compliance, insurances and business continuity arrangements as well as maintaining databases and adhering to policies and procedures. This will include direct contact with external Providers and some face-to-face contact either at meetings or during site visits.
15	To support service review activity including collation and analysis of service user needs and demographic information, statutory requirements and best practice, performance and management data, financial information as well as supporting stakeholder engagement, market engagement and management of internal and external communication. Placement Support Officers may also be required to submit this information in the form of a written report and may need to explain aspects of it to the requester to ensure the detail is fully understood.
16	Provide day-to-day support to the wider Strategic Commissioning Team as appropriate so as to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the agreed priorities within commissioning strategies and working collaboratively with Providers where required • Assist and contribute to elements of the procurement processes, as required and in-line with Legal and Council requirements e.g. through undertaking the mini competitions that are completed within placement searches • Submit advice and guidance as appropriate to your own area of expertise as required by managers, officers and colleagues from other service areas • Coach and mentor colleagues and other teams as appropriate to embed new ways of thinking and working • Deputise for Commissioning Officers at both internal and external events as appropriate and required i.e. engagement events to support other Officers/Managers, internal meetings etc
17	Remain up to date and compliant with all relevant legislation (i.e. Safeguarding Legislation), organisational procedures (i.e. The Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules), internal staff policies and professional codes of conduct in order to uphold standards of best practice.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The specific knowledge, skills and abilities required will vary depending on the needs of the role. Specific work areas may necessitate advanced specialist knowledge and skills. Post holders should be comfortable working with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Requirements	Where identified*	Essential	Desirable
BTEC/NVQ level 3 or equivalent	A		X
Commissioning knowledge, skills and experience in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract management and assurance 	A/I		X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement knowledge (particularly around brokerage) • Market engagement and management • Quality assurance (particularly around compliance for the 10 placement strands) • Service Review • Safeguarding • Data management and working with data systems • Data and financial analysis • Negotiation • Partnership working and networking 			
Good standard of IT skills and experience of using Microsoft office, Case recording programs able to create and maintain and interpret records and spread sheets and produce reports	A	X	
Excellent verbal and written communication skills	A/I	X	
Ability to work autonomously, as well as part of team, with demonstrable problem solving skills, attention to detail and the ability to successfully prioritise workloads. Ability to self-motivate, be highly organised and able to work on own initiative without immediate recourse to senior colleagues	A/I	X	
Experience of dealing with external agencies and/or the public with the ability to develop strong working relationships and provide challenge	A/I	X	
Sound knowledge and understanding of local policies and procedures (or ability to develop this) in key areas of Children's services relevant to all strands of placements. This will include Lincolnshire policies such as the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules and guidance such as the SEND code of practice.	A/I	X	
Able to respond to general enquires, guiding Independent Providers, such as Independent Residential Care Homes and schools, and workers on	A/I	X	

the routine processes and procedures in relation to the brokerage function and local policy			
Able to demonstrate initiative and creativity by identifying improvements to process and procedures and responding to changes to promote efficiency and service delivery	A/I	X	
Able to work under pressure to tight timelines, managing competing priorities and ability to successfully co-ordinate workloads with peers, as well as offering training, guidance and support to junior, supporting officers within the team	A/I	X	

*A = Application form T = Test/Assessment I = Interview P = Presentation

GENERAL

The postholder is required to take personal responsibility for contributing to organisational transformation and changes in ways of working, maximising the benefits and efficiencies for both internal and external customers, including the promotion and use of self-service to achieve maximum cost effectiveness.

The postholder is expected to work to the Lincolnshire County Council Core Values and Behaviours and to carry out the duties in accordance with Lincolnshire County Council policies.

Other Duties - The duties and responsibilities in this job description are not exhaustive. The post holder may be required to undertake other duties within the general scope of the post. Any such duties should not substantially change the general character of the post. Duties and responsibilities outside of the general scope of this grade of post will be with the consent of the post holder.

Safeguarding -. All employees need to be aware of the possible abuse of children and vulnerable adults and if you are concerned you need to follow the Lincolnshire County Council Safeguarding Policy. In addition employees working with children and vulnerable adults have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults during the course of their work.