



Practice Specialist (experienced social worker) Information Pack

Thank you for downloading the information pack for the post of Practice Specialist (experienced social worker).

This pack contains all the information you will need to complete your application:

- Job overview and person specification.
- Terms and conditions.
- Link to download the application form and the equal opportunities monitoring form.
- Overview of the recruitment and selection process at Think Ahead, including guidance notes for completing your application.

The deadline for the receipt of completed applications is 9am on Monday 09 August 2021. We cannot accept any applications received after the deadline. Please send your application to: hr@thinkahead.org

Think Ahead is committed to equality of opportunity, and we welcome applications from all sections of the community.

You will be notified via email if you have been shortlisted for interview. First-round interviews will be held on Tuesday 17 or Wednesday 18 August 2021. If you are successful at this stage, you will be invited to a short second interview involving our Chief Executive. Think Ahead is currently working entirely remotely, and the interviews will be held via Zoom.

If you would like to discuss this role informally before applying, you can arrange a call with our Lead Practice Specialist, Jacqui Bell. You can contact Jess Gray at hr@thinkahead.org to schedule a phone call.

It may not be possible to provide individual feedback to you should you not be shortlisted, because we receive a large volume of applications.

If you have any difficulty in preparing your application, or have any queries regarding your application, please email hr@thinkahead.org.

In the meantime, we wish you every success with your application and thank you for your interest in Think Ahead.



Job title: Practice Specialist (experienced Social Worker)	Salary: £44-50k dependent on location and experience. Think Ahead also offers excellent benefits (see below).
Responsible to: Lead Practice Specialist	Start date: As soon as possible – dependent on notice period.
Contract type: Permanent. Full time (37.5 hours per week), but four days per week considered.	Location: We welcome applications from across England. The successful applicant will be primarily home based but the role will involve some travel to various parts of the country for unit visits.

Background

At Think Ahead, we want to see a society where everyone with mental health problems can flourish. We know that won't happen unless people can improve their social circumstances – because issues like relationships, living arrangements and employment have profound effects on mental well-being. This is why we created the Think Ahead programme: a new route into mental health social work for talented graduates and career-changers. It has become one of the country's most competitive graduate schemes, with high-profile support across the political spectrum, extensive media coverage, and around 30 applications for each place on the programme.

The Practice Specialist role

We're looking for a dynamic and highly motivated professional to join our Practice Specialist team, working within our Programme team.

Practice Specialists play a crucial role in preparing Think Ahead participants to become outstanding social workers. Each Practice Specialist will have responsibility for a number of Think Ahead units (groups of 4-6 participants based in the same organisation), ensuring that participants receive an outstanding practice learning experience, and that there is effective delivery of our innovative curriculum in the practice environment provided by the NHS Trusts and Local Authorities that we partner with.

This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced social worker to maintain their links with frontline practice, be linked in with academic learning and gain further experience of coaching, mentoring and developing others.

By keeping in regular contact with the participant units, you will ensure that the unique blended learning approach brings together both academic and practice learning. Working with Consultant Social Workers (designated social work leads within our partner organisations) you will ensure that practice education of outstanding quality is provided, including the provision of a varied caseload which reflects service users' needs and



aspirations. This will include contributing to the skills development of Consultant Social Workers (CSWs) by providing them with coaching and mentoring.

Working with Academic Tutors from Middlesex, our university partner, you will ensure effective delivery of the curriculum and that participants are applying social work theories, interventions and legislation in practice, ensuring that as qualified social workers they are able to make an outstanding contribution to the lives of people affected by mental ill-health.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced Social Worker and Practice Educator, that has worked within mental health teams and has a proven track record of developing and supporting teams.



Job description and main responsibilities

Programme delivery and quality assurance

- Quality assure the Think Ahead programme, alongside our internal team of Practice Specialists, to ensure that an excellent practice learning environment is provided. This will include attending unit meetings (sometimes virtually) on a fortnightly basis.
- Manage the implementation of the programme across host organisations ensuring that the academic and practice components are brought together effectively.
- Oversee organisational readiness processes with all partner organisations, ensuring they are able to deliver the Think Ahead programme to the highest standard.
- Ensure the jobs provided to participants in Year 2 of the programme are suitable for a newly qualified social worker doing their ASYE.
- Work with our partnerships team to ensure that our CSW's are recruited in a timely manner, and that we have candidates of the highest quality.
- Support the academic partner and Think Ahead Programme Team to make preparations for the Summer Institute, contributing to the development of its content and form.
- Deliver learning activities at the Summer Institute in co-ordination with the lead academics by bringing practice knowledge.
- Support and develop our network of CSWs, by holding regular 1.1 meetings to ensure the placement learning environment and support provided to all participants is of the highest standard.
- Support the Academic Tutors by attending Placement Learning Agreements, Midway Meetings and Action Planning meetings as required.
- Advise and support local pastoral care arrangements for participants over both years of the programme.

Development of Consultant Social Workers (CSWs)

- Coach CSWs with the aim of improving their skills and supporting them to fulfil their potential.
- Work with CSWs' line managers to make sure that CSW job descriptions are fully reflected in their objectives whilst they are seconded to the role to enable them to be highly effective.
- Assist CSWs to develop their own reflective and problem-solving skills in complex cases and to develop these skills in the participants they lead.
- Track and monitor caseloads with CSWs monthly and make sure that there is an appropriate level of complexity of cases in each unit throughout the year.
- Support CSWs through their training programme helping to ensure they have the time and to complete their academic work.

Relationship and stakeholder management

- Establish strong relationships with all relevant key contacts across our partner NHS trust and local authorities, holding regular meetings to quality assure the programme and develop our partnerships.
- Develop awareness of the Think Ahead programme across the mental health sector including making presentations to different audiences or offering training on social interventions.
- Embed the approach to mental health social work promoted by Think Ahead in host organisations with the aim of delivering a wider impact across the social work workforce.



- Contribute to workforce planning approaches with our partner organisations, articulating the case for employing Think Ahead social workers in Trusts and LA's across the country.

Contributing to the wider programme

- Provide specialist professional social work expertise to the Think Ahead team bringing experience and knowledge of frontline practice.
- Work closely with other Practice Specialists and the wider Programme Team to ensure that reflective learning is shared and the specialist role continues to evolve and develop on the basis of experience and evaluation.

The above list of job duties is not exclusive or exhaustive and the post holder will be required to undertake such tasks as may reasonably be expected within the scope of the post.



Person specification

Education, knowledge and experience

- Social Work England registered social worker with extensive mental health experience in a range of settings and demonstrated impact as a highly effective practitioner.
- Enhanced DBS clearance.
- Significant experience of transformational mental health social work with a detailed understanding of theories, models of intervention and research activity that underpin best practice, including anti-oppressive practice.
- Experience of taking a practice leadership role including influencing others to think differently and providing a degree of critical challenge.
- Experience of working with multiple stakeholders and of communicating in a clear, articulate and engaging way including the need to balance different perspectives.
- Strong track record of post-qualification CPD in developing others as a practice educator or supervisor with an aptitude for inspiring and teaching others.
- Practice Educator Professional Standards Stage 2 award (desirable).
- Experience of undertaking a coaching or mentoring role (desirable).
- Experience of working within social work academia and research (desirable).

Skills and competencies

- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to build strong relationships internally and externally.
- Strong collaboration and team-working skills.
- Self-starting, entrepreneurial attitude with a flexible approach to work.
- Ability to make critical judgements, manage risk and hold accountability especially when under pressure.
- Highly organised including managing a diverse workload balancing different priorities and short and long term goals.
- Project management skills including project planning, completing progress reports and managing issues/risks that emerge.
- Ability to be a reflective practitioner and to keep up to date with developments in both the mental health sector and social work profession.
- Ability to employ own knowledge, experience, practice skills, networks and values to create a rich and inspirational learning experience.
- Able to demonstrate critical analysis in contributing to ongoing programme evaluation including the identification of areas for improvement.
- Solution focused with an aim to deliver excellence and to continuously improve.

We also expect everyone at Think Ahead to act in line with our values (which are set out on the next page). You don't need to address these in your written application, but we will ask questions related to them if you are invited to interview.



THINK AHEAD'S VISION

We want to see a society where everyone with mental health problems can flourish.

THINK AHEAD'S MISSION

To give talented individuals the inspiration, training, and support to empower people with mental health problems.

THINK AHEAD'S VALUES

In pursuing our vision, we each aim to be:

- **Inspirational.** We set ambitious goals, and we attract and lead others to achieve our vision.
- **Inclusive.** We respect everyone, build networks, and act in partnership.
- **Genuine.** We are honest with others, we seek feedback, and we reflect on ourselves.
- **Determined.** We stay on course, we set the right pace, and we don't give up.
- **Effective.** We use evidence and innovation to find what works and get things done.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply for the role you will need to send the following documents by email to hr@thinkahead.org:

- A completed application form.
- A completed equal opportunities form.

Both of these forms can be downloaded [here](#).



Working at Think Ahead

Location

Our London office is currently based in Kings Cross, London WC1X 8BP. We reserve the right to move your base within the London area in the event of the organisation relocating to new offices. As mentioned in the job description, Think Ahead is temporarily working on an entirely remote basis until at least the end of August 2021 due to the current advice.

Working hours

This post is full time for 37.5 hours a week. Think Ahead's core hours of work are from 10:00am to 4:00pm from Monday to Friday, with a minimum of 20 and maximum of 60 minutes for lunch each day. The office is generally open from 8.30am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday. You are free to organise your working hours within those parameters, but should ensure that your line manager is made aware of and approves your preference.

Probation period and notice period

All appointments are subject to a six-month probationary period. You will be required to give two months' notice period.

Annual Leave

28 days per annum plus UK bank holidays (pro rata for part time employees). Think Ahead offices close for an extra 4 days between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day and you will be given these days (pro rata for part time employees) in addition to your annual leave entitlement. Staff can carry over 5 days (pro rata for part time employees) into the following annual leave year.

Contributory pension

Think Ahead offers membership of a stakeholder compliant group personal pension plan operated by Aviva and will contribute up to a maximum of 7% of annual salary based on a relevant matched contribution from employees. An employee contribution of 4% is required for the maximum 7% employer contribution.

Employee Assistance Programme

Think Ahead offers all employees access to an Employee Assistance Programme, including access to telephone counselling, free and confidential advice on a wide variety of areas and up to six hours of in-person counselling.

Season Ticket Loan

Interest free loans are available for season tickets.



The recruitment process at Think Ahead

Please read the following carefully before completing your application form.

The application form:

Personal details

Make sure that your contact details are clearly displayed. If you move house between sending in your form and being interviewed, please let us know as soon as possible.

Education and training

Give a list of formal and informal training. Formal training is training that is certified, e.g. a degree. Sometimes we ask for specific qualifications. You may need to provide information so that we can assess whether you meet the qualification requirements, e.g. relevant qualification for accountancy or research.

Present and previous employment

Starting with your current or last employer, list all the employers you have worked for. Provide the job title and the period you worked for them. Briefly describe the main duties of the post. This information may be used to assess whether you meet the experience required for the vacancy. Check that the dates are correct and in order (please account for gaps in employment).

Supporting statement

This is the most important part of the form. You have to make a case here for selection. Do not repeat your career history; use only the relevant parts, drawing out the skills you have developed.

It is usually a good idea to use extracts from the person specification as headings and answer them as questions. However, do not just repeat what we are asking for. You have to demonstrate how your experience matches the criteria.

In considering your experience, remember all your previous work and draw on this to demonstrate that you have the necessary skills.

Do not forget other relevant experience outside work that may contribute to meeting the person specification, such as community, voluntary, leisure and other interests. Describe any relevant skills this experience has helped you develop.

Remember, it is your skills and abilities relevant to this job that we are looking for. You do not have to write several pages in support of your application, but rather focus on ensuring you meet the essential criteria in the person specification.



Legal and organisational requirements when filling in the application form:

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

You should not sign the application form without being clear about what you have to reveal about yourself. For instance, you do not need to disclose convictions that would be deemed as being spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, or cautions, reprimands and final warnings that are over five years old, unless they are exempt from the Act.

Referees

At least one referee must be known to you in a work capacity, and should be given by the person who line managed you. If this is not possible you should clearly explain the relationship and the reason for giving another person as a referee.

The interview

All shortlisted candidates will be contacted by either telephone or email to offer an interview and this will be confirmed by letter or email. **You will be informed of details of the interview in advance, as well as notice of any presentation, test or exercise you may be asked to do at the interview.**

The recruitment and selection panel will be comprised of a minimum of two people and will normally include the relevant line manager of the post. We will always try to ensure gender balance in the composition of the recruiting panel.

Applicants will be asked questions relating to the job description, person specification and application, and the panel will take notes during the course of the interview. This is part of the procedure to ensure that all applicants are treated equally, and to help us to make the right decision.

In preparation for the interview, take the opportunity to read through the job description, application form, and any other literature sent as part of the information pack, and be prepared to talk about your experience, giving examples that illustrate your ability to do particular parts of the job.

If you have any special requirements that would allow you to participate more fully in the interview, let Human Resources know when you are invited to interview.

Feedback

All unsuccessful candidates who have attended an interview will be offered constructive feedback; this can be useful for helping you in future interviews. Feedback should be a two-way process. It is important to use the information given to you positively. If possible, you should also give feedback on how the process felt for you.