



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.

Please note that personal details and equal opportunities monitoring data will be removed when applications are assessed. The recruiting panel will see only your education and career history, and personal statement.

The deadline for the receipt of completed applications is 9am on Wednesday 9 December 2020. 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 by Friday 11 December 2020 if you have been shortlisted for interview. First-round interviews will be held on Wednesday 16 and Thursday 17 December 2020. 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.

The Practice Specialist role

Practice Specialists play a crucial role in preparing Think Ahead participants to become outstanding social workers. Each Practice Specialist has responsibility for a number of Think Ahead units (groups of four to six participants on the programme 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 host organisations (NHS trusts or Local Authorities we partner with).

This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced social worker to maintain their links with frontline practice whilst gaining further experience of coaching, mentoring and developing others - Practice Specialists are at the heart of our innovative route into social work, and play a vital role in both the academic and practice delivery components of the programme.

By keeping in regular contact with the participant units, you will ensure that Think Ahead's unique blended learning approach brings together both academic and practice learning. Working with the Consultant Social Worker (CSW) (CSWs are the designated social work manager for the participants within host organisations) you will ensure that practice education of outstanding quality is provided, including the provision of a varied caseload. This will include contributing to the skills development of CSWs by providing them with coaching and mentoring.

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

Practice Specialists manage the delivery of the programme for different Think Ahead cohorts across identified regional clusters. These include London and the south, the Midlands and



the north. Successful applicants will be expected to travel to various parts within these regions when needed.

Job description and main responsibilities

Programme delivery and quality assurance

- Managing the implementation of the programme across host organisations ensuring that the academic and practice components are brought together effectively.
- Undertaking a range of quality assurance activities to ensure that an excellent practice learning environment is provided, ensuring compliance with the partnership agreement between Think Ahead and host organisations. This will include attending unit meetings (sometimes virtually) on a fortnightly basis.
- Establishing strong relationships with all relevant key contacts across host organisations.
- Providing leadership to ensure early identification of problems including rapid escalation to Think Ahead's Programme Director of any risks to effective local delivery.
- Building positive relationships with participants and facilitating quarterly meetings with participants from each of the units as a mechanism of receiving feedback.
- Ensuring that the host organisations make the right preparation arrangements before a new cohort starts (by taking them through a detailed organisational readiness process) and that participants are prepared for a successful transition into their first qualifying year after successful completion of Year 1 of the programme.
- Co-ordinating the recruitment of CSWs in their aligned region using standardised Think Ahead processes.
- Supporting the academic partner and Think Ahead programme team to make preparations for the Summer Institute (a four-week intensive teaching period that participants undertake at the start of the programme), contributing to the development of its content and form.
- Delivering learning activities at the Summer Institute in co-ordination with the lead academics by bringing practice knowledge.
- Providing specialist knowledge and ensuring that CSWs deliver consistently high quality unit meetings that embed a range of social interventions as set out in the curriculum.
- Supporting the work of the Academic Tutors (as required) who have responsibility for delivery of the academic component of the programme which may include some grading of direct observations of participants.
- Providing direct input into the formal processes about whether participants can progress through the programme, to support the decision making of the CSWs and Academic Tutors.
- Advising and supporting local pastoral care arrangements for participants.

Development of Consultant Social Workers (CSWs)

- Coaching CSWs with the aim of improving their skills and supporting them to fulfil their potential.
- Working with CSWs' line managers to make sure that CSWs job descriptions are fully reflected in their objectives whilst they are seconded to the role to enable them to be highly effective.
- Assisting CSWs to develop their own reflective and problem-solving skills in complex cases and to develop these skills in the participants they lead.



- Tracking and monitoring caseloads with CSWs monthly and making sure that there is an appropriate level of complexity of cases in each unit throughout the year.
- Facilitating small group coaching sessions to CSWs across different host organisations.
- Supporting CSWs through their training programme and managing the feedback processes.

Relationship and stakeholder management

- Acting as the central point of contact for Think Ahead within host organisations.
- Developing awareness of the Think Ahead programme across the mental health sector including making presentations to different audiences or offering training on social interventions.
- Contributing to the regular regional networks which are convened by Think Ahead's Programme Director and providing co-ordination as required.
- Embedding 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.
- Contributing to workforce planning approaches and articulating the case for employing Think Ahead social workers in host and potential partner organisations to secure their participation in delivering the programme to subsequent cohorts.

Contributing to the wider programme

- Providing specialist professional social work expertise to the Think Ahead team bringing experience and knowledge of frontline practice.
- Working closely with other Practice Specialists and the wider programme team and ensuring 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.

THINK AHEAD'S BENEFITS

Think Ahead is committed to the professional development and wellbeing of staff. We offer a number of core benefits to employees, including the following:

- **Flexible working.** We usually operate a "core hours" policy requiring staff to be working between 10am and 4pm, with flexibility on hours around this. (During the current unprecedented national circumstances, we are allowing alterations to these core hours where personal circumstances make it necessary.)
- **Pension.** There is a competitive stakeholder personal pension plan offered through Aviva, including an employer contribution of up to 7%.
- **Annual leave.** 28 days per year (in addition to bank holidays) plus four additional days between Christmas Eve and New Year (pro-rata for part time employees).
- **Season ticket loan.** Interest free loan for season tickets.
- **Enhanced wellbeing support.** Various wellbeing initiatives such as yoga, book club, film club and more.
- **Employee Assistance Programme.** Provided by Health Assured, giving cover for you and your immediate family. Ability to access counselling and a 24 hour helpline for a variety of topics.



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](#).

Application Timetable

- Application closing date – Wednesday 9 December at 9am.
- First interview – Wednesday 16 or Thursday 17 December 2020.
- Second interview – Friday 18 or Monday 21 December 2020.

Recruitment Process

- **Safe recruitment procedure.** Think Ahead is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults. In order to meet this responsibility, Think Ahead follows a rigorous selection process to discourage and screen out unsuitable applicants.
- **Disclosure.** Applicants are required, before appointment, to disclose any convictions that would be deemed as being unspent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions) Order 1975, or cautions, reprimands and final warnings that are over five years old, unless they are exempt from the Act. Non-disclosure may lead to the termination of employment. However, disclosure of a criminal background will not necessarily debar individuals from employment – this will depend on the nature of the offence(s) and when they occurred.
- **Shortlisting, interviews and reference checking.** Only the candidates best meeting the criteria will be taken forward to interview. All unsuccessful candidates who have attended an interview will be contacted by telephone and will be offered constructive feedback. References from the previous and current employer may be taken up for shortlisted candidates, and where necessary employers may be contacted to gain further information. Please let us know in your covering letter if we will be unable to take up references prior to interview.
- **Personal details.** All personal details and equal opportunities monitoring data will be removed when the application is assessed. The recruiting panel will see only your education, career history and personal statement.
- **Questions and further information.** If you have any questions or require any additional information please contact Jess Gray on hr@thinkahead.org. If you want further information about Think Ahead please visit our website at thinkahead.org.



Interview Detail

All shortlisted candidates will be contacted by either telephone or email to offer an interview and this will be confirmed by email. **You will be informed of the details of the interview well in advance, as well as notice of any presentation, test or exercise you may be asked to do at the interview.** Due to the current pandemic, all interviews are being held remotely, via Zoom.

The recruitment and selection panel will include a minimum of two people, and will normally include the 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 overview, the person specification, and their 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 overview, 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, please let us know when you are invited to interview.