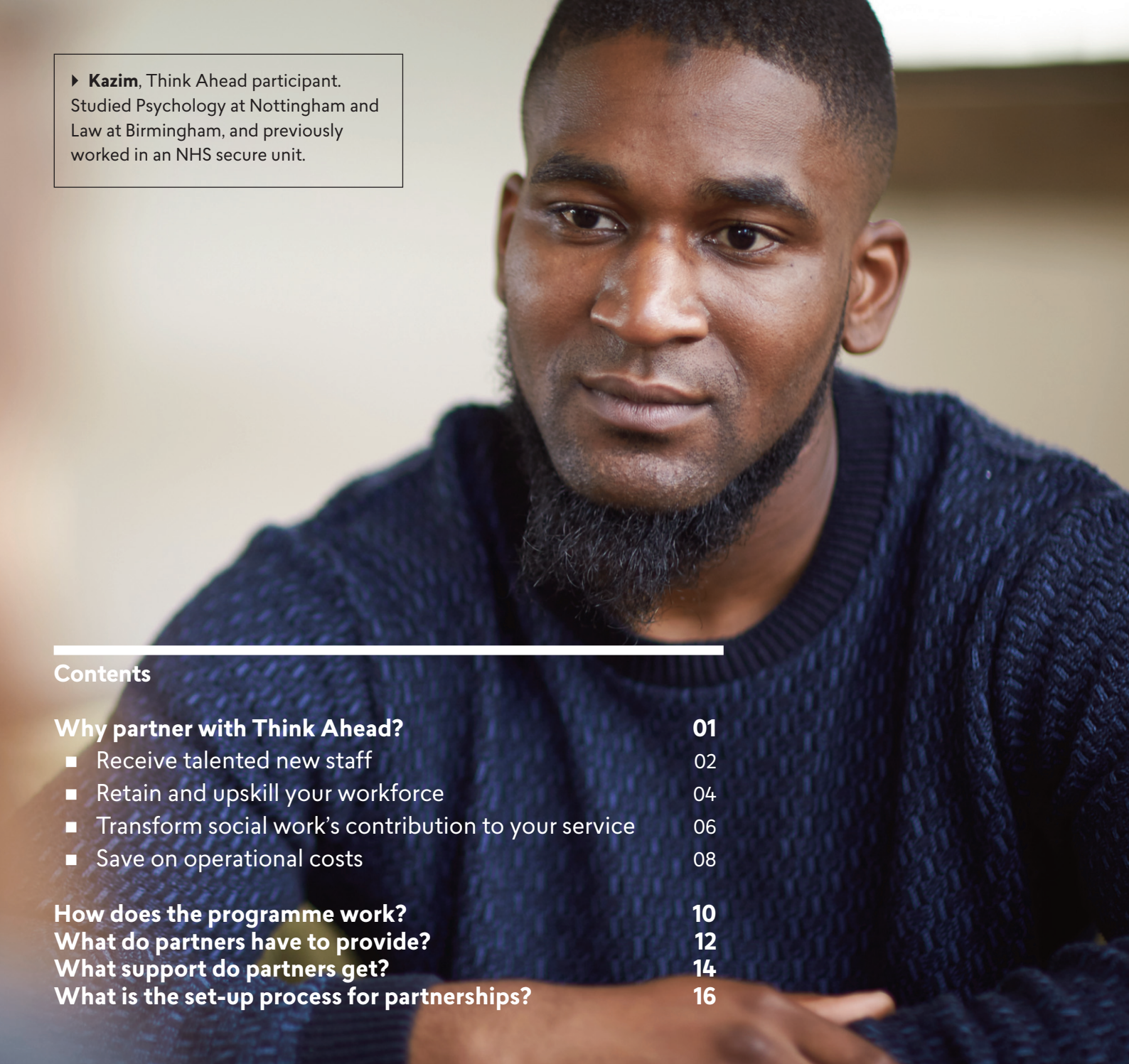




THINK  
AHEAD

**An invitation to  
partner with us  
to strengthen your  
mental health services**

◀ **Aisha**, Think Ahead participant.  
Studied English Literature at Queen  
Mary London. Left HR in the private  
sector to “do something meaningful”.

A close-up portrait of a Black man with a short beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue textured sweater. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

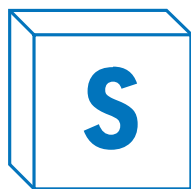
► **Kazim**, Think Ahead participant.  
Studied Psychology at Nottingham and  
Law at Birmingham, and previously  
worked in an NHS secure unit.

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# Think Ahead is a charity working in partnership with NHS and Local Authority community mental health services to improve efficiency and outcomes, by strengthening the contribution of social work.



Service users' social circumstances can have profound effects on their mental health, and social workers are best-

positioned to enable the lasting change that can achieve sustainable recovery and lessen reliance on services.

But social work often does not fulfil its potential in mental health services, because of challenges like finding talented new entrants, retaining and

developing staff, configuring services to make best use of social work, and resource constraints.

We work with NHS and Local Authority mental health services in England to address these challenges. Through our innovative graduate programme we provide you with high-potential recruits, and give them and your existing staff world-class training and development. The new capabilities and approach they bring contributes to a transformation in

the role social work plays in the service, increasing effectiveness and reducing operational costs.

We are currently working with 52 innovative services across England, and we want to further expand our network of partners.

We hope you will consider becoming one of them.

## **Ella Joseph**

Joint Chief Executive

## **Natalie Acton**

Joint Chief Executive

## **Professor Dame Carol Black**

Chair

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### **On behalf of Think Ahead's trustees:**

Dr Ruth Allen  
Professor David Croisdale-Appleby OBE  
James Darley

Professor Sir Julian le Grand  
Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP  
Donald Peck  
Lord Dennis Stevenson



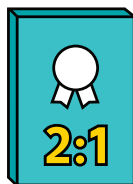
Why partner with Think Ahead?

# Receive talented new staff

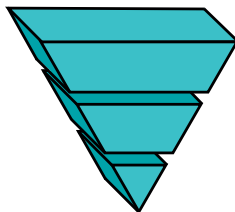
Our recruits learn on-the-job with you for a year, doing direct work with service users under the supervision of an experienced social worker. They then qualify as social workers and fill vacant posts in your service.



**23 candidates** apply for each place on the programme.



Minimum eligibility criteria include a **2:1 degree.**



**Three-stage selection process** involving social workers and service users – tests seven attributes including adaptability, relationship-building, and self-awareness.



Successful candidates undergo a **six-week residential course** to ensure readiness for the practice environment.



*The calibre of Think Ahead participants is very good and we're really excited about next year's cohort: they're bringing a combination of academic and life skills to the role.*

**Simon Owens**, Consultant Social Worker leading a Think Ahead training unit in Durham.



“ **Growing up I’d worked as a part-time carer for my disabled cousin and volunteered for a local charity which ran after-school classes for children with learning difficulties. I had thought I might end up following a career in law, but I realised that interacting with people and being able to see the tangible difference I was making was the best thing about volunteering.**

**Jack**, Think Ahead participant. Joined Think Ahead after graduating in History from Warwick.



“ **I looked at lots of corporate roles and jobs in finance, but I felt they didn’t really suit my personality. Someone close to me had depression and was self-harming, but when she told people about her mental health problems, she wasn’t taken seriously at all. Seeing her being treated like that made me want to work in mental health.**

**Aisha**, Think Ahead participant. Studied English Literature at Queen Mary London, and worked in HR in the private sector.



“ **Having worked in the NHS part-time from the age of 16, I wanted to be involved in work that was directly helping people. The uniquely holistic approach of social work really attracted me.**

**Kazim**, Think Ahead participant. Studied Psychology at Nottingham and Law at Birmingham, and worked previously in an NHS secure unit as an assistant psychologist

## Why partner with Think Ahead?

# Retain and upskill your workforce

You appoint an existing staff member to lead each unit of four Think Ahead participants during their training year as their full-time Consultant Social Worker: a great career development opportunity. The participants and the Consultant Social Worker all get our advanced training.

## Think Ahead's training:

- **Enables best practice** – the curriculum was designed by Professor Martin Webber at the University of York, based on the latest international evidence of what works in practice to achieve the best outcomes.
- **Maximises tools to enable sustainable recovery** – focused on social interventions working at three levels: individuals, families and groups, and communities.
- **Improves effectiveness in mental health settings** – covering the full range of mental health problems and related social factors.
- **Prepares staff for Approved Mental Health Professional training** – giving them a full understanding of policy and legislation in theory and practice.
- **Develops professional leadership capacity** – including through a specially designed leadership component from charitable leadership institute Roffey Park.

## The social interventions we teach include:

### Individuals

- Brief solution-focused therapy.
- Motivational interviewing.

### Families and groups

- Family group conferencing.

### Communities

- The Connecting People intervention.



When I took up the role as a Think Ahead Consultant Social Worker, I had been qualified for about four years and had just done my AMHP training. I was working as a care coordinator in a community mental health team.

The opportunity was perfect for me because I wanted to get involved in educating new social workers, and I really wanted to do it within this Trust – I entered the profession here, and I feel like this is where I've grown up professionally. Without Think Ahead, it would have taken me much longer to qualify as a Practice Educator and there would have been no guarantee that I'd get my first student quickly.

It's been a steep learning curve, but it's a great role. There is a good balance of mentoring the participants and doing direct work with the cases we share, so I haven't lost touch with the frontline – plus I'm still on the AMHP rota.

The training in modern social interventions is excellent and has made me aware of the latest techniques. When you're "firefighting" it can be easy to get into

a state where you're just monitoring service users and reacting, but this role has reminded me of the value of planning and implementing structured interventions – which can be more effective and actually save time overall. That's an approach I'll definitely take with me into future roles.

As part of the role I've got involved with discussions about social work across the Trust, and it's an exciting time as Think Ahead is part of a move to promote social interventions more widely within the organisation. I want to continue contributing to that, so I'm keen to do another year as a Think Ahead Consultant Social Worker and then find another social-work-focused role here.

I would recommend being a Consultant Social Worker to anyone. It's been a great chance to develop my skills and influence a whole new bunch of social workers who will go on within the Trust and help to take forward the improvements we've started together.

**“It's been a great chance to develop my skills and influence a whole new bunch of social workers.”**

**Kate Wilson**, Consultant Social Worker leading a Think Ahead training unit in Hertfordshire.

Why partner with Think Ahead?

# Transform social work's contribution to your services

We are currently working with 52 services across England to unlock the potential of social work and realise the impact that social interventions can have on service user outcomes.



***Think Ahead has completely reaffirmed the positive impact social work can have on the delivery of specialist mental health services. The participant unit has been like a breath of fresh air arriving into a very busy multi-disciplinary team. They have been embraced by professionals who have commented that the enthusiasm and talent of the participants has raised the profile of social work across the organisation.***

**Dr Lynn Prendergast**, Associate Director for Social Care in a service partnering with Think Ahead in Essex.



***After each training day, our participants will come back with new ideas, and share these with other team members in forums and clinical case discussions. They're bringing a whole new perspective through social interventions such as Family Group Conferencing and Motivational Interviewing.***

**Malgosia Eaden**, Consultant Social Worker leading a Think Ahead training unit in Hackney.



## Think Ahead participants are currently training and working in services provided by:

- Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health Trust
- Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Bradford District Care Trust
- Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust
- Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust
- Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust
- East London NHS Foundation Trust
- Enfield Council
- Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- Gateshead Council
- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- London Borough Hackney
- London Borough of Barnet
- London Borough of Bexley
- London Borough of Brent
- London Borough of Camden
- London Borough of Croydon
- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Harrow
- London Borough of Hillingdon
- London Borough of Merton
- London Borough of Newham
- London Borough of Southwark
- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- Luton Borough Council
- North East London NHS Foundation Trust
- North Somerset Council
- North Tyneside Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Northamptonshire County Council
- Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
- Solihull City Council
- South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
- South West London & St George's Mental Health NHS Trust
- St Andrew's Healthcare
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Surrey & Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Surrey County Council
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
- The Council of the County of Durham
- Warwickshire County Council
- Westminster City Council
- Wolverhampton City Council

Why partner with Think Ahead?

# Save on operational costs

For each unit of four participants:

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**+ 4**

**New social workers**  
With no agency or  
recruitment costs

We handle all costs relating to the attraction and selection of participants, plus reference, health, and DBS checks. In their second year with you, participants are qualified social workers and can be deployed into any of your mental health teams.

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**+ £32k**

**Or +£36k  
for partners  
in London**

**Unrestricted  
payment**  
Towards practical  
costs of the  
partnership


This includes releasing a staff member to be the full-time Consultant Social Worker for the unit throughout the first year of the programme. During this unqualified training year, the participants work on a limited caseload overseen by their Consultant Social Worker.

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**+ Free  
training**

**CPD for  
existing staff**

We give Consultant Social Workers 12 days of training, conferring a Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work Practice. This covers the social interventions in the Think Ahead curriculum, and also includes Practice Educator Professional Standards stages 1 and 2.



► **Sonya**, Think Ahead participant. Studied Psychology and Neuroscience at Manchester. Previously worked at the Royal College of Psychiatry, and volunteered at a healthcare clinic.

# How does the programme work?

## Summer Institute

This is a six-week residential experience, during which the participants are taught by expert academics, service users and professionals from a range of disciplines about the legal and policy frameworks, the range of mental health problems and social determinants, and how multidisciplinary services operate.

They practise core skills such as communication, problem solving and self-reflection, as well as beginning to learn about social interventions. Participants are assessed regularly, and must pass a readiness-for-practice assessment to progress to Year One.

## Year One

During this year of practice-based learning, participants spend 200 days on the job, away from the workplace for only 25 teaching days, in addition to weekends and a 25-day leave allowance. They are paid a training bursary by Think Ahead.

The participants work together in units of four, led by a Consultant Social Worker, on cases in an adult community

mental health setting. Initially their caseload is smaller than what a Consultant Social Worker would handle alone, and consists of less complex cases. As the participants learn, their caseload grows and can include the full range of cases. The Consultant Social Worker is accountable for the unit's caseload throughout the year.

During the year, each participant spends 170 days working in the unit, and 30 days on a Contrasting Learning Experience in a children and families service. To consolidate their learning with practice, an Academic Tutor meets the unit every two weeks.

By the end of Year One, participants gain a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work from the University of York, making them eligible to apply to the HCPC for registration as qualified social workers.

## Year Two

In Year Two, you employ the participants on a minimum 12-month contract. They no longer work in a unit and do not require a Consultant Social Worker. You can place them individually into

vacancies in any team where they will work with adults with mental health problems.

This year forms their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (as recommended for all newly qualified social workers) which is managed by your service.

The participants work full-time, with the exception of eight teaching days and fortnightly meetings with their Academic Tutor. They also study independently throughout the year to gain a master's degree in social work from the University of York.

## After the programme

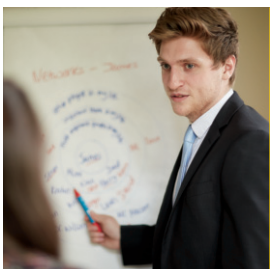
Your participants will complete the programme experienced, qualified, and feeling at home in your organisation. We hope that you will choose to offer them further employment, but you are under no obligation to do so.

The participants will be well-placed to go on to train as AMHPs and Best Interest Assessors, and in time, some may progress to management roles.



### Summer Institute

The whole intake together undergoes an intensive residential learning experience for six weeks in July and August 2018.



### Year Two

From September 2019, you employ your now qualified participants on minimum 12-month contracts, and can place them individually into any of your mental health teams. During this year, they complete a master's degree in social work alongside their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.



### Year One

In September 2018, your participants join your community mental health service, where they learn on the job in units of four participants each led by a Consultant Social Worker.

At the end of the year they gain a postgraduate diploma in social work, making them eligible to apply for HCPC registration as qualified social workers

#### You offer further employment

Your participants will complete the programme experienced, qualified, and feeling at home in your organisation.

#### You choose to part ways

You are under no obligation to employ any participant after Year Two ends.



# What do partners have to provide?

To partner with us, we will ask you to:

- **Commit to the full duration of the two-year programme.** For the 2018 cohort, that's from September 2018 to September 2020, with preparation in advance.

- **Provide participants with the right learning environment in Year One.** Each unit needs to sit within a community mental health service, located together and provided with normal working facilities. The Consultant Social Worker must be able to determine the cases given to the unit to ensure the right mix to cover the curriculum effectively. You will also be asked to arrange the 30-day Contrasting Learning Experience for each participant. This must involve direct work with children and families, in a children and family service, a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, or a third-sector provider.

- **Recruit and release a staff member to fill each Consultant Social Worker role in Year One.** Each unit must be led by a highly experienced mental health social worker. This Consultant Social Worker role is full-time throughout Year One, and is usually filled by

seconding one of your existing social workers into the position on a fixed-term basis (usually with a salary enhancement in line with the standard Practice Educator honorarium). You will be asked to take responsibility for recruiting your Consultant Social Worker(s), with direct support from our team. They will need to be released from their current role for six days of training in Spring 2018 before they move full-time to the new role in September. If they need to spend some time on AMHP or Best Interests Assessor duty to retain their status, we will work with you to enable this and use it as a learning opportunity for their participants.

- **Designate a senior Operational Lead to oversee delivery.** They will be responsible for ensuring that the Consultant Social Worker(s) and participants have the support they need from the organisation to enable a first-rate learning experience.
- **Work with partners who share our passion.** We will ask you to ensure that your local partners do what is necessary to make the programme work in your area. For example, NHS

Trusts and Local Authorities will need to work together on providing the right multi-disciplinary learning environment. We will also want to get to know your partners to make sure that they, like you, are committed to realising the impact of social approaches in mental health.

- **Employ participants in appropriate settings in Year Two.** You can place Year-Two participants where your need is greatest, but their role must allow them to work with adults with mental health problems. Their contract with you should be full-time for at least 12 months, with the usual salary for a newly-qualified social worker. You will be asked to manage their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, including ensuring an appropriate caseload.
- **Support participants to study alongside their work.** They need to attend 24 teaching days away from your service in Year One, and eight in Year Two. They will also have fortnightly short meetings with their Academic Tutor.

► **Amy**, Think Ahead participant.  
Joined Think Ahead after  
graduating in Human Sciences from  
Oxford.



# What support do partners get?

In addition to the direct payment and the free training for Consultant Social Workers, we assign one of our Practice Specialists to work with you throughout the partnership. This highly experienced social worker will support you with:

- **Recruiting the Consultant Social Worker(s).** The Practice Specialist will provide standardised job descriptions and adverts, and can lead internal workshops to explain and promote the role. They also plan and take part in the assessment process, including arranging for an actor to run a role-play task that assesses candidates' practice skills.
- **Preparing to receive the participants.** Before your participants arrive the Practice Specialist will meet with your lead staff member(s) and your Consultant Social Worker(s) regularly to run through the necessary preparation, following a standardised checklist based on experience. This includes helping to plan the participants' immediate induction when they arrive.
- **Managing the unit during Year One.** The Practice Specialist directly supports your Consultant Social Worker(s) to run their unit(s) effectively. They are trained coaches, and offer regular coaching sessions to your Consultant Social Worker(s). They also attend the unit's Case Consultation Meetings, where the unit members present cases and seek input from each other.
- **Planning the transition to Year Two.** As the end of Year One approaches, the Practice Specialist will again meet with your Operational Lead and Consultant Social Worker(s), to help plan what qualified roles the participants will take up in Year Two and ensure a smooth transition.
- **Becoming part of the Think Ahead network.** We convene twice-yearly network meetings for staff in partner organisations to meet and exchange news and best practice. Your Practice Specialist will also be able to make informal connections, putting you in touch with others in our network who have similar objectives or have faced similar challenges. Many of our current Operational Leads have used their partnership with us to reposition social work within their services.
- **Anything else.** From the moment you become a partner, your Practice Specialist will be available to answer questions or provide advice on an ad-hoc basis.



► **Jacqui Bell**, Think Ahead Practice Specialist. Jacqui qualified as a social worker in 1993, and before joining Think Ahead she managed a multi-disciplinary community mental health team in Westminster for 15 years.



# What is the set-up process for partnerships?

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## Now

Get in touch to let us know you're interested.

Email **partners@thinkahead.org**

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## Nov 2017

You confirm that you wish to partner with us.

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## Jan 2018

We sign a partnership agreement with you. We work together to recruit your Consultant Social Worker(s).



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## Apr 2018

Your Consultant Social Worker(s) are appointed. We tell you about the individual participants who will be joining you.

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## Jun 2018

Your Consultant Social Worker(s) do their pre-programme training.

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## Sep 2018

Your participants arrive to start their on-the-job training with you.



***We're proud partners of Think Ahead. All my years of NHS experience have underlined the importance of social workers to mental health; you cannot get by without them. This scheme can make a lasting difference to creating strength and pride in this great profession.***

**Claire Murdoch**, NHS England National Mental Health Director and Chief Executive of Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust.



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