**Think Ahead Consultant Social Worker**

**Applicant information**

Think Ahead is a charity working in partnership with NHS Trust and Local Authority community mental health services to improve efficiency and outcomes, by strengthening the contribution of social work. The charity runs a two-year programme training talented graduates to be mental health social workers. We recruit over 160 graduates a year, and they join partner organisations in “units” of four to six – each unit is supervised by an experienced Consultant Social Worker for their first year. For the 2022 Cohort, we are partnered with Think Ahead for a unit of four participants.

**About the role**

We are looking for an experienced and inspiring social worker to take on the Consultant Social Worker role.

This is an exciting opportunity to progress your social work career, staying in frontline practice whilst developing management and leadership experience, and leading change within your organisation. You will share a service user caseload with the unit, providing practice education of outstanding quality, and enabling participants to develop high quality social work practice.

To equip you for the role, we will provide a fully funded and accredited training course, access to a network of peers, one to one support from Think Ahead and Middlesex University (our academic partner). You do not need previous experience as a Practice Educator, as training is provided.

There is potential for this role to be a job-share between two social workers, or for there to be a full time Consultant Social Worker and one Associate Consultant Social Worker who will be responsible for supervising one or two participants whilst undertaking their PEPS training.

**About Think Ahead**

At Think Ahead, we want to see a society where everyone with mental health problems can flourish. To drive positive change, we created the Think Ahead programme: a new route into mental health social work for talented graduates and career changers.

The programme has become one of the country’s most competitive graduate schemes, with high-profile support across the political spectrum, extensive media coverage, and 30 applications for each place on the programme. Through our 2016-2020 cohorts we have partnered with over half of NHS Trusts and around a third of Local Authorities, and have trained over 100 Consultant Social Workers.

As a charity, we aim to:

* Attract outstanding people to enter mental health social work.
* Promote excellence in training, to create superb mental health social workers.
* Support services to unlock the potential of social work.

**About the programme: Structure and focus**

Participants attend a four-week online Summer Institute starting in July to ensure readiness for practice. In Year One there are a total of 180 days on placement. This includes a 30-day Contrasting Learning Experience in a children and families setting. Participants undertake a combination of face-to-face and online distance learning throughout their placement. They are awarded a PGDip in Social Work Practice at the end of Year One and register with Social Work England.

In Year Two, the newly qualified participants are employed by the organisation and complete their ASYE and work towards a master’s degree in Social Work. The Consultant Social Worker role is only for Year One and does not take responsibility for supervising them during Year Two.

Throughout the programme, participants study mental health social work and evidence-based social interventions at three levels (individuals, families and communities) which will become the foundation of their social work practice.

**Associate Consultant Social Worker**

The organisation may also identify – through the same recruitment process – an additional member of staff to act as an Associate Consultant Social Worker. This role will also benefit from excellent CPD opportunities in PEPS 1 and 2, evidence-based social interventions and leadership skills. The Associate Consultant Social Worker will normally supervise and provide practice education to at least one participant whilst undertaking PEPS training and oversee their caseload. The Associate Consultant Social Worker will support the participant unit in the event that the Consultant Social Worker is unable to fulfil their duties. Mandatory training: PEPS 1 and 2, leadership skills. Optional training: Relationship based practice.

**Job description**

Consultant Social Workers are at the heart of the Think Ahead programme and play a crucial role in preparing Think Ahead participants to become outstanding social workers.

In this role you will ensure that participants receive a high quality practice learning experience. You will work closely with the participants’ Academic Tutor to assess their ability to apply social work theories, social interventions and legislation in practice, ensuring they develop skills and understanding to empower people with mental health needs. You will also have responsibility for the participants’ wellbeing and welfare whilst they are on placement.

The role is a full-time equivalent fixed term contract post. If you currently practice as an Approved Mental Health Professional or Best Interests Assessor, you will continue to carry out statutory duties during the course of your secondment at a maximum of twice a month.

You will undertake the **Post-Graduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work** which consists of two modules:

* **Relationship Based Practice**. This covers teaching on Motivational Interviewing, Systemic Family Interventions and Connecting People.
* **Practice Educator Professional Standards Stages 1 and 2**. Consultant Social Workers who are not PEPS qualified are expected to undertake this training. If you are already PEPS2 qualified, you will be expected to undertake a one day refresher training.

The Practice Education programme builds your skills to teach, supervise and assess participants on placement. Completing this course will enhance your professional social work skills and develop your capacities in critical reflection, supervision and professional leadership.

The training is mandatory as part of the role (except Relationship Based Practice for Associate Consultant Social Workers). You will be supported in your training by the academic team from Middlesex University and receive up to 3 days’ private study time per module.

You will also attend an online Cohort Launch Event around June 2022 where you will meet the participants in your unit, other Consultant Social Workers and learn more about the programme. Think Ahead hosts four Consultant Social Worker Development Meetings across the year which includes fully funded and bespoke leadership training. Consultant Social Workers attend these events to support development in their roles. You will have regular contact from a Think Ahead Practice Specialist. Practice Specialists are Think Ahead staff – they are qualified mental health social workers with a range of experience managing multi-disciplinary teams and services. Their role is to ensure that the quality of the practice placement experience is of a high standard and support partner organisations in delivering this.

**Contract**

* Full-time equivalent fixed term opportunity.
* Training starts in July 2022.
* Start date no later than beginning of August 2022; end date August 2023.

**Key accountabilities**

**Management of the participant unit**

* Plan and deliver participant inductions.
* Act as an ambassador for Think Ahead within your organisation, raising the profile of social interventions taught on the programme within mental health services.
* Support integration of the unit within the organisation.
* Responsible and accountable for allocating a service user caseload to participants – ensuring effective social work support provided in accordance with relevant legislation and local/national policy.
* Role-model outstanding evidence-based social work practice.
* Develop participants’ practice skills in line with their learning requirements under the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).
* Provide individual weekly supervision, weekly unit case discussion and regular support to participants day to day throughout their placement.
* Be responsible for participants’ wellbeing and welfare on placement, and co-ordinating support plans with participants’ Personal Tutor.
* Work closely with participants as they are exposed to varied and increasingly complex caseload to increase their autonomy as their placement progresses.
* Raise the profile of mental health social work in your organisation.
* Support participants to develop leadership skills and qualities in practice.
* Regular contact with Practice Specialist regarding quality assurance of the placement learning environment.
* Report any challenges regarding the placement learning environment.
* Be involved in Think Ahead and Middlesex University evaluation including completing surveys and giving feedback for Consultant Social Worker forum meetings.

**Practice education**

* Produce evidence-based midway and final reports for each participant in a timely manner.
* Undertake three direct observations for each participant at each placement stage.
* Provide feedback to participants, addressing performance issues together with the Personal Tutor.

**Fully funded Continuing Professional Development**

* Cohort Launch Event, date TBC June/July 2022.
* Quarterly Consultant Social Worker Development Meeting with leadership training and networking starting on 27 July 2022.
* PEPS refresher training (if PEPS2 qualified): one day around July 2022.
* Relationship Based Practice module training (social interventions) starting on 28 July 2022 to January 2023, 5 days, other dates TBC.
* PEPS 1 training starting on 29 July 2022 to November, 6 days, other dates TBC.
* PEPS 2 training starting on 12 January 2023 to June, 5 days, other dates TBC.
* Dates and details of the training will be confirmed. Up to 3 days’ private study per module.

**Person Specification**

**Education**

* Social work qualification at degree level and current Social Work England social work registration.
* Aptitude and intellectual curiosity for further study at post-graduate level.
* Practice Educator Professional Standards Stage 2 qualification *(desirable).*
* Post-qualification CPD in social work practice and/or training and leading others *(desirable).*

**Knowledge, experience and skills**

* At least two years post-qualifying experience *(desirable)*.
* Experience of supervising or mentoring other practitioners *(desirable).*
* Knowledge of relevant legislation and policy, with the ability to apply this knowledge to practice.
* Awareness of theories, models of intervention and research activity that underpin best practice in adult mental health social work.
* Significant social work experience in mental health settings.
* Highly skilled in mental health social work with individuals, groups and communities.
* Excellent risk assessment and risk management skills.
* Ability to employ own knowledge, experience, practice skills, networks and values to create a rich and inspirational learning experience.
* Confidence in critically and constructively reflecting on others’ social work practice.
* Excellent analytical, influencing and negotiation skills.
* Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
* IT literacy.
* DBS clearance.
* Full driving licence and access to a car for business use *(desirable).*

**Personal qualities**

We expect Consultant Social Workers to role-model the personal qualities that we expect of our participants:

* **Leadership:** the ability to act as a professional role model, demonstrate initiative, and engage others and enable them to achieve their goals.
* **Motivation:** personal commitment to transforming the lives of people with mental illness, with an understanding of the positive impact of social work and the Think Ahead mission.
* **Adaptability:** resilience and flexibility in changing circumstances, with the ability to work under pressure and deal with uncertain or unexpected outcomes.
* **Relationship- building:** empathy and respect for all individuals, with the ability to build relationships and understand people’s motives and perspectives.
* **Communication:** the ability to collaborate with and influence a wide range of people, in person and through written communication.
* **Problem- solving:** the ability to objectively analyse situations, using evidence and clear judgement to generate effective solutions.
* **Self-awareness:** the ability to understand, and reflect critically on, both your own personal development and how your actions affect others.