**Job Title**

**Group Manager - Placements**

**Group Manager - Fostering, Kinship and Special Guardianship**

Job Ref

Job type: Full-time 35 hours

Closing date:

Contract Type: Permanent

Salary: £62,922 - £67,500 (SCP 49-53) SMG 1

Basic/Enhanced DBS check required

Discover yourself in Lewisham where what you do makes a difference to our vibrant and culturally diverse communities! We have a rich history of welcoming people from all over the world and are proud to be recognised as the UK’s first Borough of Sanctuary, for our work in championing the rights of refugees and migrants.

It's an exciting time to join us - Lewisham is a wave 2 Pathfinder authority and is leading the way on national reforms to social work practice through the Families First for Children programme.

**INTRODUCTION**

We are seeking experienced group managers to join our senior management team. Lewisham is a wave 2 Pathfinder local authority and we are at the forefront of the reforms to children’s social care. It is an exciting time to join us and if you are an experienced group manager or you are looking for your next career development opportunity then these roles could be for you!

Successful candidates will have significant experience above team manager level of overseeing all aspects of social work practice. You will have experience of supervising staff and a thorough knowledge of social work practice as well as specialist knowledge relating to the post you apply for.

The group manager posts provide strategic and operational leadership and are responsible for the quality of performance and practice in the area. The group manager supports the head of service and has responsibility for ensuring that quality of operational practice continues to be improved in the teams.

These are central roles which require visible leadership and a proactive approach. Postholders will be able to work effectively with partners and be creative and ambitious for children in our borough. You will be energised by the opportunity to take on a leadership role in a borough which is leading the way and having impact at a national level on social work practice.

**What’s the role?**

**Group Manager – Placements**

Are you passionate about securing high-quality, stable accommodation for children and young people? Join our forward-thinking leadership team in this pivotal role, shaping the future of placement sufficiency in Lewisham during a time of significant national change.

In this role, you will navigate evolving legislation on supported accommodation, market pressures, and the development of local authority residential homes.

You will play a crucial role in ensuring that Lewisham provides safe, high-standard placements that lead to positive outcomes for children and young people. You will lead on placement strategy, ensuring oversight of regional cooperatives and shaping the market.

You will be able to develop and implement innovative solutions that respond to legislative changes and industry trends. You will foster strong relationships with accommodation providers to drive service improvement and sustainability.

**About You**

We are seeking an experienced professional who is:

* Highly organised, with a strategic mindset and a deep understanding of the current placement sufficiency landscape.
* Able to demonstrate a proven background in service development and planning, with a track record of implementing effective oversight.
* Dedicated to ensuring quality and positive outcomes for children and young people through robust placement reviews.
* Experienced in management including of complex operational practice and line management of more than one team.
* Experienced in managing a budget.

**Group Manager – Fostering, Kinship & Special Guardianship**

Are you passionate about ensuring children and young people receive high-quality, stable care through fostering, kinship arrangements, and Special Guardianship? We are recruiting for a Group Manager – Fostering, Kinship & Special Guardianship, where you will lead efforts to strengthen placement support, enhance carer recruitment, and drive positive outcomes for children in need of stability and care.

You will lead strategic planning to improve foster care provision, kinship support, and Special Guardianship arrangements. You will ensure foster carers, kinship carers, and special guardians receive robust training, guidance, and support – both practical and financial.

The postholder will work collaboratively with regional and national fostering and kinship networks to stay up to date with policy changes and best practices.

You will oversee placement stability initiatives, ensuring children and young people experience continuity, safety within a nurturing environment. You will lead service development and continuous improvement, ensuring regulatory standards are met and exceeded.

**About You**

We are looking for a committed leader who is:

* Experienced in fostering, kinship care, and Special Guardianship arrangements, with a strong understanding of national legislation and local authority frameworks.
* Skilled in relation to service development, ensuring carers and guardians receive the highest level of support and resources.
* Passionate about securing positive outcomes for children, advocating for placement stability and quality care across all pathways.
* A strategic thinker, capable of driving impactful change and building strong partnerships across the sector.
* Experienced in management including of complex operational practice and line management of more than one team.
* Experienced in managing a budget.

The person applying must have a thorough technical knowledge of the requirements of Working Together 2023, the Pan London Child Protection Procedures and other relevant safeguarding and care planning statutory guidance.  A track record of practice improvement and an in depth understanding of the Signs of Safety practice framework are essential.

You will lead your teams to promote and deliver the objective, that all children and young people in Lewisham are safe and reach their full potential.

As the group manager you will support strategic thinking and operational management for the service, you will be a key member of the extended senior management team. You will have 3-5 direct reports and manage a service area consisting of 3-5 teams. You will be responsible for practice improvement in your service area using Signs of Safety as our practice framework. You will manage a small budget.

You will need to be a skilled and reflective practitioner and leader with a clear vision of what good practice with children and families looks like. You will be able to use and analyse performance data effectively to support our work with children and families and have a good understanding of different methods of quality assurance. You will supervise team managers and support them in their professional development.

You will need to be a registered social worker and have recent proven management experience and be able to demonstrate your experience, skill, and ability to think strategically and embed the strategic objectives into operational practice, leading by example, supporting people to deliver agile services that meet the needs of our children. You will need to evidence reflective and creative practice. A child focused approach is essential, ensuring that the views of Lewisham children are central to developing and delivering services.

**What’s in it for you?**

**Our Vision - What Good Children’s Social Work Looks Like in Lewisham**

In Lewisham Children’s Social Care, we know what good social work looks like and we are passionate about creating the right conditions and culture for good practice to thrive.

* Families are respected and supported to stay together, whenever there is safety.
* Families will tell us they understand why we are involved.
* Children will tell us their social worker has made a difference to their lives.
* Children who are in our care know we care, and we won’t give up on them.
* Young people who have been in our care feel confident about their future.

We have taken a whole system approach to improving our services to children and young people in our borough using Signs of Safety as our practice model.  Ofsted recognised the progress we have made noting that:

* *Staff talk positively about their manageable caseloads, regular supervision, team meetings and access to a range of training, including the social work model of practice.*
* *Senior leaders demonstrate a clear focus on hearing the voices of children to develop and improve services.*
* *Leaders know the service well. They have a clear understanding of areas for development that are being appropriately addressed.*

In January 2024, Ofsted's report lauds significant improvements in our children's services. Praised areas include strong leadership, high-quality support for families and children, and positive outcomes across all criteria.

* *The Executive Director for Children and Young People and his team are credited for driving these improvements, with particular focus on enhancing workforce stability, early help services, and partnerships with stakeholders.*
* *Noteworthy practices include creative life-story work and culturally sensitive social work approaches, crucial in a diverse borough like Lewisham.*
* *The Council's anti-racist practice network and safe space platform also garnered praise for supporting staff from black and global majority backgrounds.*
* *Overall, the report highlights a commendable commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in Lewisham.*

**Why choose Lewisham?**

*“Lewisham has so much to offer any social worker. I feel supported, respected and valued every step of the way”*(Social Worker).

Our social workers benefit from working in small, supportive teams with caseloads on average between 15-20 children. Our Signs of Safety family-led practice framework means we are committed to working in a relationship-based way with children and families, focussing on strengths in the family network to effect change. A positive learning culture which promotes opportunities for reflection and relationship-based practice is important to us. We are committed to developing our practice using reflective practice spaces such as case mapping, thinking spaces and group supervision.

Our permanent and stable senior management team are visible and approachable.  Our dedicated workforce team supports professional development across the service so that you will;

* be supported through our comprehensive learning and development offer, which includes subscription to ‘Research in Practice’.
* receive regular supervision and appraisal.
* have 1-1 practice development coaching as a case holder, and professional development coaching as a manager.
* have access to regular Signs of Safety training.
* have access to external leadership development opportunities such as the Black and Asian Leadership Initiative (BALI).
* have a clearly defined career progression pathway with opportunities for professional development at all levels.
* have opportunities to become a practice educator and work with students and newly qualified social workers.

**What we’re looking for**

If you want to work in a thriving borough and our social work vision connects with your professional values, then we are interested in hearing from you. We are looking for people to join our team who:

* value the importance of communication and seeking feedback
* can inspire and motivate those they work with, manage and lead
* are committed to developing their skills and expertise to deliver an excellent service
* are professionally curious and value thinking slowly and calmly in a balanced way
* work inclusively, collaboratively with others recognising their strengths
* take responsibility and make a positive contribution by focusing on solutions
* are transparent, are appreciative in enquiry, reflect and learn.

In return, we’ll offer excellent development opportunities, the opportunity to make a real difference to our local community plus a range of benefits including:

* Generous leave entitlement
* Local Government Pension scheme
* Flexible working and family friendly policies
* Season ticket and bicycle loans
* A range of staff discounts including local subsidised gym memberships
* Supportive staff networks

**Location**

The job is primarily based in Laurence House in Catford SE6. There are 2 local train stations 3-5 minutes’ walk from the office, and the train journey from London Bridge is approximately 15 minutes. There are also numerous bus routes that stop right by the office.

We operate a hybrid approach where you will be required to work both in the office and from home on a regular basis.

**Creating an Inclusive Lewisham**

A core value of Lewisham Council is to 'draw on the diversity of our communities to create a more inclusive Lewisham'. We believe that freedom from discrimination and equality of opportunity are fundamental rights, and that each person should be valued regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, or age. Social inclusion lies at the heart of everything we do as a Council in our roles as an employer, a provider of services and a community leader.

**Diversity**

Lewisham Council is a Disability Confident employer. We welcome and encourage job applications of all abilities. If you require any reasonable adjustments in the application or interview, please contact the lead contact on this advert. We will make reasonable adjustments to make sure our disabled applicants and those with health conditions are supported throughout our recruitment process. We support the access to work scheme, further details are available at [www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply)

The Council has a dedicated employment support service, [Lewisham Works](https://lewisham.gov.uk/lewishamworks), which offers Lewisham residents guidance in relation to applying for jobs. If you want to join Lewisham Works, please email JobsAndSkills@lewisham.gov.uk and an advisor will be in touch with you.

**Your Application**

The recruitment process is anonymous and we don’t accept CV’s.

Applicant handbook- please read the guidance in this handbook when applying. It is essential that you complete the application fully and that your supporting statement covers how you meet each of the person specification criteria listed.

**Special conditions**

* The post holder must have a social work qualification and be registered with Social Work England
* The job is subject to a DBS check (Basic/Enhanced)

For an informal discussion about this job, please contact pathfinder@lewisham.gov.uk

**Salary**

£62,922 - £67,500 (SCP 49-53) SMG 1

All appointments will be offered at the minimum spinal column point (SCP) for the grade of the role. The only exception to this will be when matching current salary (up to the maximum of the scale), which is subject to evidential proof

The Council reserves the right to close adverts early if there is a large response.

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