**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 100 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 2020 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.

**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 23 applications for each place on the programme. Through our 2016-2019 cohorts we have partnered with over half of NHS Trusts and around a third of Local Authorities, and have trained over 89 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 residential Summer Institute starting in July to ensure readiness for practice. In Year One there are a total of 200 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 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.

**Role**

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’ Personal 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.

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. All Consultant Social Workers are expected to undertake this module.
* **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. 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 the Cohort Launch Event on 16 May 2020 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 are highly recommended to 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.)

The role is a full-time 12 Month Secondment 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.

**Contract**

* Full-time secondment opportunity.
* Training starts in July 2020.
* Start date August 2020; end date September 2021.

**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**

* Attend Cohort Launch Event on 16 May 2020, London.
* Consultant Social Worker Development Meeting with leadership training, and PEPS refresher training (if PEPS2 qualified): 22 July 2020 at Middlesex University, London.
* Relationship Based Practice module training (social interventions): 23-24 July 2020 at Middlesex University. Online distance learning: 8 October, 9 November 2020 and 11 January 2021.
* PEPS 1 training: 27-28 July 2020 at Middlesex University. Online distance learning: 1 September, 1 October, 2 November and 1 December 2020.
* PEPS 2 training: 7-8 January 2021 at Middlesex University. Online distance learning: 22 February, 19 April and 9 August 2021.
* There may be a requirement to stay overnight at the training location. Details of the training will be confirmed. Up to 3 days’ private study per module.
* Three other Consultant Social Worker Development Meetings with bespoke leadership training, support and networking with other Consultant Social Workers.

**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.