

Protecting Children Policy and Practice Advisor

Recruitment Pack

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in this post.

Social Work Scotland is the professional body for social work managers and leaders. We are a membership body and exist to promote and support the development of the social work profession, and to inform, influence and improve public policy and social services.

We are excited to be recruiting to our Protecting Children Policy and Practice Advisor Post. With funding provided by Scottish Government, this post plays a key role in supporting statutory social work to develop and strengthen national policy and practice in relation to child protection and the protection of children and young people. This includes contributing to implementation and continuous improvement activity associated with the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, Keeping the Promise, UNCRC incorporation, Bairns' Hoose, Joint Investigative Interviewing and other key national reform programmes.

This post facilitates links between professional leadership, the Scottish Government and Child Protection Committees Scotland. It supports Social Work Scotland's contribution to the national protection agenda, including Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, the Interagency Referral Discussions project, Joint Investigative Interviewing reform, Bairns' Hoose implementation and the Age of Criminal Responsibility work plans. The post also contributes to wider national developments relating to child protection practice, children's rights, and implementation of key policy and reform programmes including the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland and Keeping The Promise.

Working in partnership with local social work Child Protection leads, the Scottish Government Child Protection Social Work Professional Advisor and colleagues in COSLA, the National Social Work Agency and CELCIS, the post provides both capacity and leadership at the national level. Reporting to our Children and Families Policy and Practice Lead, with direction from our Chief Social Work Officer Group, Children and Families Standing Committee, and Child Protection Sub-Group, the post holder has the opportunity to make a unique contribution around the value of social work in the provision of holistic support for children and families. The postholder will work collaboratively across Social Work Scotland's wider policy, practice, and improvement activity, including alongside colleagues supporting Joint Investigative Interviewing, Interagency Referral Discussions and other national programmes.

At the core of Social Work Scotland is a commitment to assisting the profession to be the best it can be for the individuals, families and communities who need social work or social care support; the Protecting Children Policy and Practice Advisor role assists us to deliver on that commitment.

Applicants should have experience of policy development and implementation and be confident operating at a national level.

We are looking for an individual who can work independently yet as an integral part of the team, bring a collaborative approach to work with partners, and with an ability to identify issues, articulate workable solutions, and build consensus; all with a view to social work values and principles.

The post holder will be a qualified and registered social worker with significant experience in children and families' social work.

Application notes

To apply for this post, please submit a covering letter/email and a completed application form.

Your covering letter should be between 800 and 1000 words and should set out why you want the job, summarise your relevant experience, and explain how you meet the Person Specification. Please state in your application form if you are happy for us to contact referees prior to interview. Secondments are welcome.

Please find included in this pack:

1. Key information, including contact details and summary of the recruitment process.
2. Information about Social Work Scotland
3. Job description
4. Person specification

Completed application forms and covering letters should be sent to admin@socialworkscotland.org by 11:59pm on 6th September 2026.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Ben Farrugia

Director, Social Work Scotland

1. KEY INFORMATION

Protecting Children Policy and Practice Advisor	
Employer	Social Work Scotland Ltd
Work location	Mix of working from home and office-based Social Work Scotland's office is based at Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY
Position type	Full time (35 hours per week)
Salary	Within the range £55,000 to £62,000 per annum (depending on experience).
Contract	Fixed-term contract of 2 years. Following the end of the contract, we will discuss options including career progression opportunities within the team, or a contract extension, where appropriate. All posts at Social Work Scotland are subject to a probation period, the precise length of which will be indicated in an offer letter. Secondments welcome.
Our commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity.	We are an equal opportunities employer, and we are committed to building an inclusive workplace where everyone is treated fairly and respectfully. We particularly encourage applications from care experienced, disabled and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. We have a range of flexible working policies available to staff, provided that the responsibilities of the position can be met within the preferred work schedule. Should you require any adjustments for your interview, please inform us and we will endeavour to support your needs.

Pension	Auto enrolment pension provided by The People's Pension, with an employer's contribution of 6% and an employee contribution of 5% as standard. (Pension contributions may be made to existing private pension schemes on request.)
Equipment provided	Laptop Other IT and/or communications equipment necessary for home working. Social Work Scotland will also provide, where appropriate, equipment to meet specific, individual needs.
Benefits	Flexible working arrangements, in respect of the structure of your working week and contingency of the post which includes travel across the country. We also offer salary sacrifice schemes for: • Bike to Work, including Cycle Miles • Childcare vouchers
Start date	As soon as possible following a formal offer of the post.
Application process	To apply, please provide the following 1. A covering letter/email explaining why you want the job, highlighting relevant experience, and explaining how you meet the 'Person Specification' (detailed below). The letter should be between 800 and 1000 words. 2. A completed application form, including details of two work or education related references. (Please state clearly if you do want us to contact references prior to interview.) Completed applications should be sent to: admin@socialworkscotland.org by 11:59pm on 6th September 2026.

Interviews	We anticipate holding in-person interviews week beginning 14th September 2026 at Norton Park, Edinburgh. Shortlisted candidates will be invited for a 45 – 60 min interview (involving a mix of competency and scenario-based questions). The successful candidate may be invited to a follow up meeting with members of the Social Work Scotland team prior to an agreed start date.
Contact information	If you have any questions, please contact: Caroline McDonald, Children and Families Policy and Practice Lead, Social Work Scotland Caroline.McDonald@socialworkscotland.org

2. ABOUT SOCIAL WORK SCOTLAND

Who are we and what do we do?

Social Work Scotland is the professional body for social work managers and leaders. We are a membership body, with members coming from across the public, private and voluntary sectors. We exist to promote and support the development of the social work profession, and to influence and inform public policy affecting social workers, social services and local communities.

Upholding the values which underpin the social work profession, we give importance to every individual's experience and voice, and seek to make social justice real through all that we do. We embrace change and encourage collaboration. We are committed to creating opportunities for our members and team through which individuals can develop as compassionate, creative and effective leaders.

Our core objectives (as set out in Social Work Scotland's Articles of Association)

- a) Pursue social justice, human rights and equality for all of Scotland's citizens
- b) Promote the unique role, value and contribution of social work
- c) Articulate the expertise and insight of social work managers
- d) Inform the development and implementation of policy, at national and local levels
- e) Support high-quality and effective leadership within social work and social care
- f) Champion research and evidence as the basis of policy and practice
- g) Facilitate collaboration and practice improvement among social work and social care providers
- h) Shape the direction and development of social work in Scotland

To help deliver these objectives we facilitate a large number of committees and sub-groups, populated by our members. Among these is the Chief Social Work Officers network. Governance is provided primarily by the Social Work Scotland Board, which is made up of company and non-executive directors; it is chaired by Social Work Scotland's Convenor.

Our Team

We have a core team consisting of 16 staff and host a number of other staff who are with us for a fixed time, working on a specific project (usually in partnership with Scottish Government or other national partners). At the moment, we have 12 staff in these posts.

3. JOB DESCRIPTION

As Social Work Scotland's Protecting Children Policy and Practice Advisor you will provide the national team and partners with operational insight and expertise around child protection and related issues. You will play a key role in national discussions relating to child protection policy and practice, workforce capacity, implementation and improvement activity, and the learning and development needs of the profession. This includes supporting Social Work Scotland's contribution to national work relating to child protection reform, children's rights, Keeping The Promise, Bairns' Hoose, Joint Investigative Interviewing, Interagency Referral Discussions, Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and other emerging national priorities. You will assist project leads in the delivery of their work programmes, and support colleagues and Social Work Scotland members to realise our organisation's objectives; that includes playing a role in public-facing communication about the role and value of social work.

Reporting to the Children and Families Policy and Practice Lead, you will work with Social Work Scotland's Children and Families Committee, its Child Protection Sub-Group, local authority Chief Social Work Officers and key partners (such as the National Social Work Agency (NSWA), COSLA and colleagues in the voluntary sector). You will be a visible representative of the profession, and you will assist others to articulate Social Work Scotland's positions in high-profile forums and settings such as Parliament, national meetings, and the media.

The postholder will work closely with Social Work Scotland colleagues across policy, practice and improvement functions, and alongside nationally funded projects and programmes hosted by the organisation. Through active collaboration, information sharing and joint working, they will help ensure that child protection issues are considered through a wider social work and public policy lens, recognising the connections between child protection, family support, children's rights, community wellbeing and broader developments across social work services.

In helping to support effective national leadership of social work in Scotland, you will be expected to ensure the voices of children, families, carers, and communities inform all aspects of this role.

You will be supported by, and report to, the Children and Families Social Work Policy and Practice Lead.

Your **key responsibilities** will be to:

[Strategic / Policy / Workforce]

1. In consultation with relevant Social Work Scotland Chairs, the Children and Families Policy and Practice Lead, Head of Policy and Practice and other colleagues, you will be the primary contact within the organisation in relation to child protection social work matters, establishing effective working relationships with key partners including Scottish Government policy teams and Social Work Professional Advisors, the National Social Work Agency, CELCIS, COSLA, Child Protection Committees Scotland and colleagues leading national improvement activity
2. Provide advice and guidance on matters of child protection social work policy and practice to colleagues, Social Work Scotland members and partners, and work closely with others to ensure that the views of children and families, and social work professionals, are embedded in that advice and guidance.
3. Engage and collaborate with Chief Social Work Officers, the Children and Families Standing Committee and Child Protection Sub-Group, to help articulate, communicate, and deliver on Social Work Scotland priorities, objectives, and positions in respect of child protection and related issues.
4. When required, represent Social Work Scotland's members on national groups and forums, or in collaborative work with national partners, or giving evidence to parliamentary or other inquiries.

[Member Engagement and Support]

5. Support Social Work Scotland members to represent the association on national groups and forums, providing briefing and guidance as required.
6. Provide practical support to the Social Work Scotland's Child Protection Sub-Group (and other Sub-Groups as directed), assisting the Chair(s) and administrative colleagues to set the agenda, agree work-plans / outputs, organise and facilitate meetings, keep records (of meetings and membership) and manage member engagement / participation.
7. In relation to child protection matters, support the Children and Families Policy and Practice Lead, Head of Policy and Workforce and relevant Social Work Scotland Chairs to provide professional social work leadership at the national level, by maintaining connections with relevant partner organisations and Scottish Government's policy teams and the National Social Work Agency, taking ownership of and delivering on discrete outputs, keeping Committee and Sub-Group members informed about relevant research and national developments.

8. Maintain active connections with Social Work Scotland colleagues and members to ensure cross-Committee issues (e.g. transitions, substance use, mental health, and other emerging issues) are given attention and profile. Remain alert to emerging research, practice developments, policy change, and national events which may affect children, families and social work services, ensuring these are appropriately reflected within the organisation's work.
9. Facilitate the drafting of responses to consultations and calls for evidence, on behalf of Social Work Scotland.
10. Develop briefings and learning opportunities such as seminars and workshops for Social Work Scotland members and partners, in collaboration with the SWS Communications and Events Manager.

This role requires the postholder to manage a high degree of ambiguity and to be comfortable and flexible in navigating sensitive situations which may arise or change quickly.

The role also requires high levels of in-person and digital interactions with a wide range of people on a day-to-day basis, proactive and reflective relationship building and maintenance, and the ability to be able to demonstrate empathy and understanding of others' perspectives at all levels.

This role is ideally suited to someone who thrives in a team environment, who can navigate and balance a wide range of demands and maintain connections with the rest of the Social Work Scotland team, quickly establishing areas of joint responsibility and cross-over.

4. PERSON SPECIFICATION

A qualified, experienced children and families' social worker (ideally up to at least team leader level), you are passionate about the value of social work and the development of the profession and social services. You are familiar with the policy development and implementation cycle, keen to bring your insight and experience into national discussions. You are a proven leader, able to take people with you, but also able to reflect and adjust your own position when necessary. You are a credible representative of the profession, able to secure the trust and confidence of your peers.

You must be interested in expanding your knowledge base and understanding others' perspectives. Sound research and analytical skills help you do this. You are sensitive to others positions and needs, and able to plan and develop strategies which move us, with partners, towards shared goals. You are excited about this chance to assist Social Work

Scotland's members to think through the issues of the day, and to support them to realise the opportunities that are available.

The post holder will have the following attributes:

Essential Criteria

1. Strong interpersonal skills, able to quickly build relationships and trust.
2. Broad but nuanced understanding of contemporary child protection and children and families social work issues, across national, local and practice levels.
3. Educated to a degree level, with a professional social work qualification and registered with the SSSC or equivalent body.
4. Minimum of two years in a children and families social work management position, with operational experience in child protection.
5. Demonstrable experience in leading change, influencing colleagues and partners to achieve specific outcomes.
6. Coaching and mentoring skills, able to support colleagues to develop and improve.
7. Demonstrable high-quality spoken and written communication skills, able to synthesise varied information (including research and statistics) to construct coherent, evidence-based positions.
8. Highly organised, able to plan and deliver to specific timescales.
9. An ability to work flexibly and proactively, using initiative to manage a diverse workload.
10. Competent using MS Office (Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.)

Desirable criteria

1. Experience in a senior leadership position within a Scottish local authority, with responsibilities relating to child protection.
2. Experience of working at the national level, engaging with Scottish Government, the Scottish Social Services Council, Care Inspectorate, etc.
3. Current or past membership of Social Work Scotland's Child Protection Sub-Group.
4. Project management skills and/or experience.

5. Familiarity and knowledge with change methodologies, including specifically quality improvement and implementation science.
6. A track record of written output (including local policies and procedures, consultation responses, etc.)