**CHILD RIGHTS ADVISER**

**Job Description**

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| Job Title: | Child Rights Adviser, Help at Hand Service |
| Location: | Central London |
| Job Grade: | Higher Executive Officer (HEO) |
| Salary: | £32181 to £35,387 |
| Full Time: | This is a full time role, working 37 hours per week. |
| Responsible To: | Head of Advice |
| Introduction to the CCO: | The Children’s Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield OBE, has a statutory duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is her job to make sure children’s rights are respected and their views are taken seriously within government.  The post of Children's Commissioner was initially established by the [Children Act 2004](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents) and the remit strengthened through the [Children and Families Act 2014](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted). The Children and Families Act 2014 gives the Commissioner special responsibility for the rights of children who are in or leaving care, living away from home or receiving social care services. She also speaks for wider groups of children on non-devolved issues including immigration (for the whole of the UK) and youth justice (for England and Wales).  The Children’s Commissioner’s Office does a wide variety of work to promote and protect children’s interests and rights including reporting to parliament, undertaking research, leading public debate on specific issues and running events to gather and understand the views and experiences of children and others. |
| Purpose of the Job: | **Help at Hand** is the Children’s Commissioner’s national advice and representation service for children and young people who are **in care, leaving care, living away from home or being helped by children’s services (Children Act 2004 s8A, Children and Families Act 2014, Part 6, s108).**  The service is independent of the Government and exists to make sure that young people’s rights and entitlements are upheld and that their views are taken seriously.  Help at Hand is accessible via free phone (0800 528 0731), email (help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk) and via a form on the Children’s Commissioner’s website.  The service takes new enquiries via phone and email.  We aim to offer a flexible service that can provide children and young people scheduled calls beyond normal working hours if needed, as well as monitoring the line/inbox for urgent enquiries out of hours. Therefore, variable patterns of work and flexibility in hours are sometimes required.  Help at Hand prioritises formal representation and advice to children and young people in or leaving care, or in receipt of children’s social care services, with a focus on their legal rights and entitlements.  We also accept enquiries and take on cases from professionals and sometimes parents, who raise issues on behalf of children. Common issues addressed include unwanted moves, not feeling listened to, missing from education, housing/homelessness, financial difficulties, and transitions out of care.  Help at Hand’s team of Child Rights Advisors are responsible for empathetically listening to callers/enquirers, assessing the nature of their concerns, applying the legal framework, problem solving and then providing appropriate advice and signposting and/or an efficient strategy for formal representation that will help positively resolve the issue. Formal representations are most often to social workers, independent reviewing officers and heads of service. The team is also responsible for drafting letters to Directors of Children’s Services and other decision makers on behalf of the Commissioner.  The team is responsible for triaging all incoming enquiries to determine the urgency of the concern, consider the most appropriate response and decide which organisation(s) or professionals need to be contacted to help achieve the best outcome. All enquiries are reviewed at a weekly case review to help ensure timely and impactful outcomes and to reflect on decision-making.  The Help at Hand team support the evidence, communications and policy functions of the office in a number of ways. The information gathered from the service plays an important role in informing the wider work of the office. Child Rights Advisors contribute to work across the office by sharing issues and trends from the service, as well as providing expert advice to policy and evidence staff from a frontline, practice-based perspective. Child Rights advisers make a substantive contribution to one or more policy or evidence projects each year in addition to their core Help at Hand duties and are expected to be proactive in identifying issues to bring to the attention of the policy team. |
| Specific Duties: | **Respond to a range of enquiries from children, adults and professionals requiring advice, assistance and representation. The post holder will:**  Be the frontline service for response to calls and enquiries to Help at Hand received via phone, email or online.  Provide a timely, effective child-friendly and knowledgeable response to all enquiries, managing issues efficiently and solving problems. Respond to enquiries promptly and at the right level of risk/complexity. Decide on the specific approach to enquiries in light of the protocol for the service and your professional judgement, seeking to solve problems and improve outcomes and experiences of children.  Ensure that any safeguarding concerns are alerted at once to senior staff in accordance with the safeguarding policy so that urgent action can be taken as required.  Maintain high quality records regarding enquiries.  **Develop rights advice and information materials for children, young people and professionals**  Contribute to the team’s work on promotional materials, FAQs, digital and print information and web content, in consultation with children and young people.  **Contribute to the development and growth of the service**  Contribute to the promotion of the service and communication of information about the service to children, young people and professionals, developing new methods to access the service, and gathering feedback.  Identify themes emerging from the advice service and contribute to the Office’s wider research and policy work.  Provide support to policy, evidence and engagement work with children in care and care leavers.  Liaise with advocacy, social care, youth justice and other stakeholder organisations as appropriate. |
| Essential Skills/Experience Required: | Experience as a lawyer, social worker, advocate or other professional working with or alongside children providing advice, support and/or advocacy to children and young people. Able to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of complex case management.  Excellent working knowledge of the laws, rights and entitlements in relation to children in care, care leavers, those living away from home (including the secure estate) and those working with children’s services, including children subject to child protection or child in need plans.  Excellent applied knowledge of the practical systems that impact on the lives of children in care, care leavers, those living away from home or working with children’s services. This includes an understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of these young people and how practical systems and the application of policy impact on their day-to-day lives.  Critical thinking and assessment skills. This includes the ability to investigate and analyse a situation quickly summarise and make appropriate action plans based on complex information from a variety of sources, maintaining a focus on the child’s voice and interests.  Strong personal skills in communicating with children and young people, as well as with relevant professionals and other adults involved in their lives or care. This includes the ability to provide sensitive and empathetic responses along with accurate and succinct information.  Understanding of the strategic context in which decisions are made with the ability to challenge decision makers firmly and fairly and with impact on behalf of children and young people. Ability to represent children to authorities to secure better services and support and to identify and raise wider strategic and policy issues.  Excellent written communication skills to draft responses and letters, summarise information and to adapt messages to the strategic context and preferred tone and style of the Office.  Strong organisational and planning skills with ability to manage a large volume of enquiries, adapt to changing priorities and manage and prioritise cases.  An ability to build positive relationships and good team working with colleagues and external stakeholders to meet the needs of the service and wider Office.  IT skills including Microsoft Office (Word/Excel/PowerPoint) |
| Desirable Skills/Experience | Detailed knowledge of educational rights and entitlements, particularly for children with disabilities or additional needs.  Detailed knowledge of mental health systems and referral pathways, as well as rights and entitlements of children in secure mental health settings.  Experience of and interest in policy and public affairs  Experience of and interest in qualitative research and engagement with children and young people. |
| Date: | September 2018 |