Portsmouth CITY COUNCIL

Best Start in Life Practitioner

Salary: Band 6 , £29,170 to £33,119 per annum

Hours per week: 37 Hours per week

Contract type: Fixed Term until March 2029

Location: This role will be based at Paulsgrove Family Hub

Portsmouth City Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Every post is subject to PCC and Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership safer recruitment procedures.

This role requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at Standard/Enhanced level which will be required prior to any offer of employment and this post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

About the role

The role is about providing support early, building trusted relationships with families, and helping children and families access the right help at the right time. The support offered will be needs-led rather than diagnosis-led, meaning families can receive advice, guidance and practical help without needing to wait for a diagnosis or meet a referral threshold.

You will help ensure children with emerging or additional needs can access the full Best Start offer through Family Hubs, community settings and partner services. This will include supporting inclusion, identifying barriers to participation, strengthening access for underserved families and helping children make progress towards positive early outcomes, including communication, development and school readiness.

The postholder will work in partnership with existing services and will complement the established inclusion offer across Early Years, Family Hubs and community settings.

Key principles of the Best Start in Life Inclusion Service

- Early identification and support at the earliest opportunity.
- A needs-led rather than diagnosis-led approach.
- Promoting inclusion, participation and accessibility for all children and families.
- Improving school readiness and developmental outcomes.
- Supporting speech, language and communication development.
- Building parent carer confidence, knowledge, resilience and capability.
- Reducing inequalities through outreach and engagement with underserved communities.
- Working collaboratively with families, Family Hubs, early years settings and partner services.
- Using feedback, outcomes and evidence to support continuous improvement.

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Responsibilities

In this role, you will provide visible, accessible and relationship-based support to families through Family Hubs, network sites, community settings and, where appropriate, outreach or home visits. This may include drop-in sessions, booked appointments, group-based support, workshops and practical guidance for families.

You will help families understand their child's needs, navigate services and access information, advice and support. This may include supporting families to complete forms, prepare for appointments, access early help and understand relevant pathways and processes. You will work alongside families in a way that builds parent carer confidence, knowledge, resilience and capability, helping families feel more empowered to understand, support and advocate for their child.

You will use observation, discussion and strengths-based conversations to understand children's development and family needs, including areas such as speech, language and communication, interaction, sensory differences, play, behaviour and participation. You will provide practical strategies that families can use within everyday routines and support the home learning environment through coaching, modelling and practical advice.

You will promote children's speech, language and communication development through everyday interactions, coaching, modelling and practical advice for families and practitioners. You will use evidence-informed tools, resources and agreed screening or identification approaches, such as communication screening tools where these are part of local pathways, to support early identification of speech, language and communication needs and ensure families receive appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.

You will support children's readiness for school by helping families and early years providers promote communication, social interaction, emotional wellbeing, play, independence and participation in learning opportunities. Where additional needs are identified, you will support families and settings to implement practical strategies that help children achieve the best possible outcomes before transition to school.

You will help ensure children with emerging or additional needs can access the full range of Family Hub and community services. This will include identifying barriers to participation, supporting reasonable adjustments, promoting inclusive practice within groups and activities, and gathering feedback from families about accessibility and inclusion.

You will undertake targeted outreach activity to engage families who may be less likely to access support, including disadvantaged communities, isolated families and families experiencing barriers to engagement. This may include delivering support in community venues, participating in outreach sessions and building relationships with local organisations and trusted community partners.

You will work closely with Family Hub colleagues and partner services, including Early Years settings, schools, health services, SEND, Early Help, social care, Portage, the EY Inclusion Team, EY funding Outreach Officers, Speech and Language Therapy where appropriate, and voluntary/community sector partners.

The role will help strengthen joined-up working, reduce fragmentation for families and support effective transitions for children.

You will also contribute to inclusive group provision, peer support networks, workshops and community-based support. This may include helping to monitor, support or develop inclusive

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opportunities such as SEN stay-and-play provision within Family Hubs, where this meets local need.

The role will involve maintaining accurate records, following safeguarding procedures, escalating concerns appropriately, sharing information in line with guidance, and collecting information relating to service activity, family outcomes, participation and feedback. You will contribute to evaluation and continuous improvement by ensuring information is recorded consistently and accurately.

Who is the person?

You will have/be:

- A Level 3 or above qualification, or equivalent experience, in early years, health, education, child development, social care or a related field.
- Experience of working directly with children aged 0-5 and their families, including children with emerging needs, developmental differences or additional needs. Experience of delivering support in community, home or early years settings, and of working in partnership with other services is also important.
- A good understanding of child development from birth to five, early identification of emerging needs, inclusive and strengths-based approaches, safeguarding and how families access support across services.
- Knowledge of early speech, language and communication development and an understanding of how communication needs can affect learning, behaviour, participation, family routines and school readiness.
- Strong communication skills, including the ability to explain information clearly and simply, provide practical advice and coaching, respond flexibly to family need, manage your time well and work both independently and as part of a multi-agency system.
- Confident working with families to build confidence, resilience and participation, including families from diverse communities and those who may experience barriers to accessing support.
- Committed to family-centred, relationship-based practice, inclusion, reducing inequalities, whole-family working, partnership and collaboration. You will value co-production, listen to families and communities, and work in a respectful and culturally responsive way.

Desirable

Experience includes working within Family Hubs, children's centres or early help services, knowledge of local services and community provision, experience supporting transitions, experience using communication or developmental screening tools, and understanding approaches such as Portage-informed practice, developmental play or interaction-based strategies.

You will need to demonstrate that you have the Right to Work in the UK. No post will be offered without it.

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