

Job description

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| **Job title** | Advice and Information Officer (Northern Ireland) |
| **Accountable to** | Head of Advice and Information (Line Manager)  Head of Operations (Northern Ireland Manager) |
| **Objectives** | The Northern Ireland Advice and Information role meets our key strategic objective to ‘support fostering families and the services that work with them to provide the best possible care for children and young people’. In practice, this is broken down into the following operational objectives:  *Objective 1*  To deliver an excellent, responsive advice and information service to The Fostering Network members, foster carers, fostering service staff, prospective foster carers and other stakeholders in Northern Ireland on fostering related issues.  *Objective 2*  In conjunction with the Director of Northern Ireland, and the Head of Advice and Information, to contribute to the maintenance and development of information and advice materials which meet the needs of foster carers, fostering service staff, The Fostering Network members, prospective foster carers and other stakeholders.  *Objective 3*  To provide an exceptional information and advice service by keeping up to date with changes in the fostering, social care and other relevant sectors to inform the information and advice given.  *Objective 4*  To contribute knowledge and information on fostering and fostering related issues in Northern Ireland where required. |
| **Hours per week** | 22.5, which must include the opening hours of Fosterline Northern Ireland (9.30am – 1.30pm Monday to Friday). |
| **Location** | Office-based at The Fostering Network in Northern Ireland (Unit 22, 40 Montgomery Road, Belfast BT6 9HL) but flexible by agreement and in line with the operational needs of the service. |
| **Status** | Permanent. |
| **Disclosure required?**  **(The post involves contact with children and/or access to confidential information about children and families)** | Yes (Access NI). |

**Responsibilities and accountabilities**

1. To deliver a high-quality, responsive and professional advice and information service byanswering telephone, email, postal and occasionally face-to-face enquiries in line with The Fostering Network’s standards, policies and procedures.
2. To provide specialist information and advice about fostering policy and practice in Northern Ireland, in line with the relevant legislation, regulations and statutory guidance, with the aim of achieving best practice across the fostering sector and in line with The Fostering Network’s policies.
3. To maintain high-quality and accurate records of enquiries, including the advice and information given, and to ensure that appropriate information, themes and data are shared with colleagues in line with data protection policies.
4. To contribute to the production of high-quality information and advice materials, including information gathering and synthesising, drafting and reviewing online and in-print resources as required.
5. To provide a reliable, relevant and evidence-based advice and information service by keeping up to date with changes in the fostering sector, social care sector and other relevant sectors to inform the information and advice provided.
6. To occasionally act as advocate for foster carers, which may include attending panels to support foster carers and escalating issues of concern in line with The Fostering Network’s safeguarding and escalation policies.
7. To contribute ideas and feedback to help inform the development of the advice and information service in Northern Ireland, and across the UK.
8. To organise, prioritise and manage complex enquiries, liaising with external agencies where appropriate (including solicitors for the legal advice service) with due regard for confidentiality and data protection.

**General statement**

It is the nature of The Fostering Network that tasks and responsibilities are in many circumstances unpredictable and varied. All employees are therefore expected to work in a flexible way when the occasion arises and undertake tasks that are not specifically covered in their job description.

Person specification

**Our values**

As an organisation, we believe that we make a difference to foster care and our people values are expressed in the work that we do:

We are TRUSTED.

We are TOGETHER.

We are VITAL.

**Knowledge and experience**

***Essential***

* Knowledge of the current regulations, statutory guidance and standards that apply to the delivery of fostering services in Northern Ireland, and the laws, policies and practice in Northern Ireland as they apply to children looked after, foster care and leaving care.
* Working knowledge and understanding of issues affecting children and families in Northern Ireland, including safeguarding issues, and the challenges facing foster carers.
* Demonstrable experience of providing practical and/or emotional support to others by telephone and/or email.
* Knowledge and understanding of the importance of maintaining confidentiality in relation to advice and information provision, as well as an understanding of the importance of data protection, its application and implications.
* Understanding of statutory structures and responsibilities in Northern Ireland.
* Knowledge and understanding of the welfare benefits and income tax systems and how they apply to foster carers.

***Desirable***

* Experience of foster care, social work, counselling or community work with carers, families and children, or a similar area of paid or voluntary work.

**Skills and abilities**

***Essential***

* Excellent inter-personal skills, with the ability to build and maintain collaborative working relationships with The Fostering Network’s members, foster carers, professionals, colleagues and other stakeholders including members of the public.
* Excellent verbal and written communication skills, with the ability to provide appropriate, relevant and accurate information and advice verbally and in writing to a wide variety of audiences.
* The ability to listen to, digest and explain complex information in a succinct and understandable way to a wide variety of audiences.
* The ability to work under pressure and to manage sensitive and emotional situations in a timely and appropriate manner.
* The ability to relate to people from a diverse range of backgrounds.
* The ability to work in a flexible and collaborative manner, seeking advice where appropriate and escalating issues of concern, including safeguarding concerns.
* The ability to organise and prioritise a demanding workload.
* The ability to solve problems and undertake appropriate research to help answer enquiries.
* IT skills, including word processing skills and the ability to use email and input data to the CRM (with training).

***Desirable***

* Working knowledge of Microsoft 365 including Microsoft Teams and SharePoint.
* Experience of using a CRM such as Microsoft Dynamics.

**Additional information**

**Pay and conditions of service**

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| **Band** | The Fostering Network Band 5 |
| **Salary** | £22,138 - £35,318 per annum pro rata |
| **Annual leave** | 25 days plus 5 The Fostering Network days per annum pro rata |
| **Probationary period** | 6 calendar months |
| **Notice period** | 4 working weeks  (1 week during probationary period) |
| **Hours of work** | 22.5 hours per week, which must include the opening hours of Fosterline Northern Ireland (9.30am – 1.30pm Monday to Friday). |
| **Pension** | Optional. Money-purchase scheme and salary sacrifice option is available with AEGON:  Employee contribution is 3% of gross annual salary  Employer contribution is 5% of gross salary |
| **Trade union** | The Fostering Network recognises the trade union Unite and members of staff can join if they wish. |