



Candidate Pack

Practice Specialist

Fixed Term Contract

November 2025

Dear Candidate

We're delighted you're interested in joining Think Ahead as a Practice Specialist.

This pack contains all the information you will need to apply, including:

- The job overview and person specification.
- Timelines and information on how to apply.
- The legal bits, including our terms and conditions.

The closing date for this vacancy is 1st December 2025, and we cannot accept any late applications.

Interview dates: 10th and 12th December 2025

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Improving our diversity and inclusion is a priority focus for us, and we are actively seeking candidates from a wide range of backgrounds. We are committed to flexible working and will consider a range of options for the successful applicant to fill this post (these can be discussed at interview stage).

We are also a disability confident committed employer and encourage applicants with disabilities. Please let us know how we can make the recruitment process more accessible for you by emailing hr@thinkahead.org. Please also let us know if you would like us to send you the job pack in a different file format.

We regret that we cannot respond individually to all applicants due to the high number of applications we receive. If you have not been contacted within 2 weeks of the closing date, please assume that you have not been shortlisted for interview.

I wish you every success with your application and thank you again for your interest in Think Ahead.

Phoebe Hale
Practice Specialist Manager

About Think Ahead

At Think Ahead, we believe that everyone living with mental health needs should be empowered to live the life they want and deserve. To achieve this we need a thriving mental health workforce.

We recruit, train and promote the mental health workforce, to enable the best support for people living with mental health needs. We know that good mental health care means looking at the whole person and the social determinants of their health – their home, relationships, finances, work and community.

It is an exciting time to join Think Ahead as we diversify our income and drive new business across our portfolio of training, workforce development, research and campaigning.

We are

A mental health workforce non-profit organisation.

Our vision

A thriving mental health workforce able to support people to live the life they want.

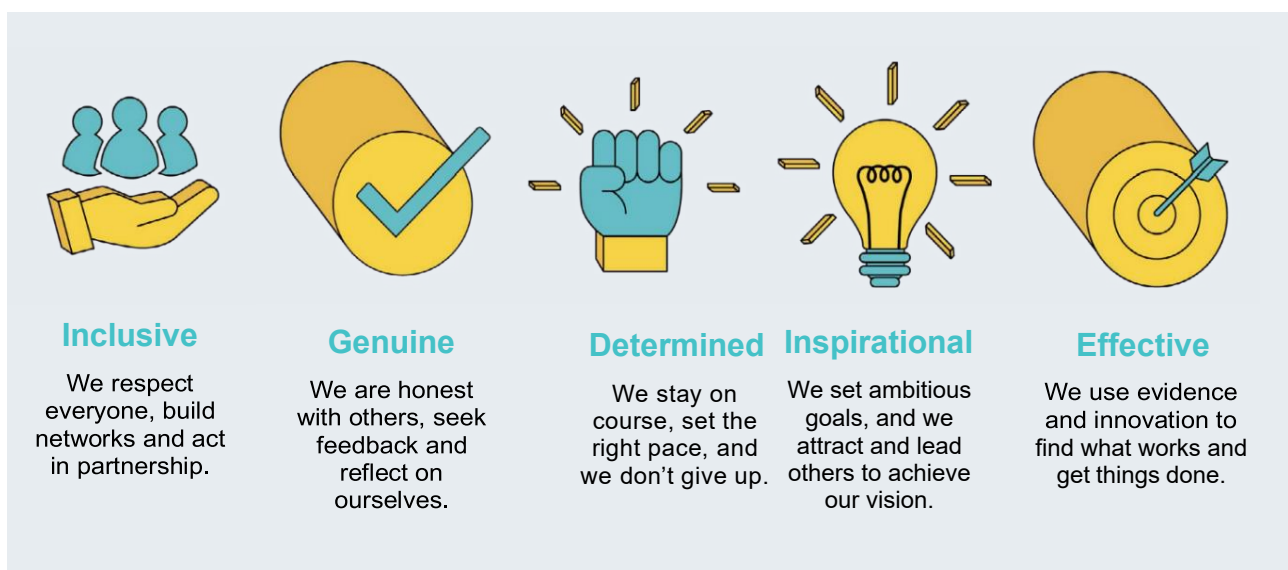
Our mission

We recruit, train and promote a thriving mental health workforce. We advocate for professionals to have the resources needed to deliver the right support at the right time.

Our values

Everyone who is part of Think Ahead is guided by our values. They were developed in collaboration with the people we work most closely with: our trainees, mental health and social work professionals, people with lived experience of mental ill-health, and supporters of our work.

In pursuing our goals, we each aim to be:



We embrace working with anyone who shares our goals and our values, and we aim to promote equality and diversity across all areas of our work – from the way we recruit mental health social work trainees and head office staff, to what we teach on our flagship programme and how we design and deliver it.

We believe that working with a diverse range of people and honoring different perspectives is not only the right thing to do, but it also adds tremendous value – and is fundamental in working towards a society where everyone with mental health problems can flourish.

Job description

Job Title Practice Specialist (experienced social worker)

Reporting to Practice Specialist Manager

Working hours Full time, 37.5 hours a week

Contract 6 - 9 month fixed term contract

Salary £46,920 or £49,980 (London based)

Location

Due to travel, based in London or Southeast. Hybrid/homeworking - You'll be expected to attend our London office, in Chancery Lane/Farringdon or London venue at least 2 days a month, with flexibility.

About the role

We are looking for a dynamic and highly motivated professional to join our Practice Specialist team. Practice Specialists play a crucial role in preparing Think Ahead participants to become outstanding social workers.

This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced social worker to maintain links with frontline practice and practice education, with development opportunities for teaching delivery, and coaching and mentoring others. Each Practice Specialist will have responsibility for ensuring that participants receive an outstanding practice learning experience, and that there is effective delivery of our innovative curriculum in the practice environment provided by the NHS Trusts and Local Authorities that we partner with.

You will develop excellent relationships with senior stakeholders within NHS Trusts and Local Authorities and academic tutors from Middlesex University ensuring that Think Ahead has strong partnerships and that the placements provided are of the highest standard. Working with our Head of Partnerships and Development and Practice Specialist Manager, you will ensure that we build strong networks and you will be able to use your knowledge and expertise to help feed into and develop our organisational strategy.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced social worker and practice educator, that has experience of working within mental health and has a proven record of accomplishment of developing and supporting social workers. We are also looking for someone with experience and confidence in delivering training and is willing and motivated to get involved in this evolving area of the charity.

Key responsibilities

Programme delivery and quality assurance

- Manage the implementation of the programme across host organisations ensuring quality placements and that the academic and practice components are brought together effectively. This will include visiting placements.
- Ensure the jobs provided to participants in Year 2 of the programme are suitable for a newly qualified Social Worker doing their ASYE.
- Support the participants on receiving their P.G. Dip SW and continue quality assurance during the practice-based year (ASYE) to aid completion of the Masters and retention.
- Support the academic partner and Think Ahead Programme Team to prepare for the Summer Institute, contributing to the development of its content and form.
- Deliver learning activities at recall days in co-ordination with the lead academics by bringing practice knowledge.
- Support and develop our network of CSWs, by holding regular 1.1 meetings to ensure the placement learning environment and support provided to all participants is of the highest standard.
- Support the Academic Tutors by attending Placement Learning Agreements, Midway Meetings and Action Planning meetings as required.
- Ensure that any reasonable adjustments required for participants are implemented in a timely manner with our host organisations.
- Advise and support local pastoral care arrangements for participants over both years of the programme.

Development of Consultant Social Workers (CSWs)

- Support development of CSW's through regular coaching, supervision and training.
- Assist CSWs to facilitate reflective group case consultation meetings.
- Track and monitor unit caseloads, ensuring that there is an appropriate level of complexity and diversity of cases.
- Support CSWs through their training programme helping to ensure they have the time and to complete their academic work.

Relationship and stakeholder management

- Establish strong relationships with all relevant key contacts across our partner NHS trust and local authorities, holding regular meetings to quality assure the programme and develop our partnerships.
- Develop awareness of the Think Ahead programme across the mental health sector including making presentations to different audiences or offering training on social interventions.
- Embed the approach to mental health social work promoted by Think Ahead in host organisations with the aim of delivering a wider impact across the social work workforce.
- Contribute to workforce planning approaches with our partner organisations, articulating the case for employing Think Ahead Social Workers in Mental Health (NHS) Trusts and Local Authorities across the country.

Contributing to the wider programme & future of Think Ahead

- Provide specialist professional social work expertise to the Think Ahead team bringing experience and knowledge of frontline practice.
- Work closely with other Practice Specialists and the wider Programme Team to ensure that reflective learning is shared, and the specialist role continues to evolve and develop based on experience and evaluation.

- Be involved with the delivery and implementation of the Think Ahead training offer, including leading on the training for the mental health workforce where necessary.

The above list of duties is not exclusive or exhaustive, and the post holder will be required to undertake such tasks as may reasonably be expected within the scope of the post.

Person specification

Education, knowledge and experience

- Social Work England registered Social Worker with mental health experience in a range of social work settings and demonstrated impact as a highly effective senior practitioner with supervisory experience.
- Enhanced DBS clearance.
- Experience of influencing others to think differently and providing a degree of critical challenge.
- Experience of working with multiple stakeholders and of communicating in a clear, articulate and engaging way including the need to balance different perspectives.
- Demonstrable post-qualification CPD in developing others as a practice educator or supervisor with an aptitude for inspiring and teaching others.
- Experience of delivering/facilitating training and a willingness to be involved in the development of Think Ahead's training offer.

Skills and competencies

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to build strong relationships internally and externally.
- Strong collaboration and team-working skills.
- Self-starting, entrepreneurial attitude with a flexible approach to work.
- Ability to make critical judgements, manage risk and hold accountability especially when under pressure.
- Highly organised including managing a diverse workload balancing different priorities and short and long-term goals.
- Ability to be a reflective practitioner and to keep up to date with developments in both the mental health sector and social work profession.
- Ability to employ own knowledge, experience, practice skills, networks and values to create a rich and inspirational learning experience.

Desirable

- Qualifications in coaching or mentoring
- Experience of working in the charity sector.
- Experience of working with people with lived or learned experience to co-develop and deliver projects.

Our benefits

Pay and pension

- Transparent pay structure.
- Auto-enrolment in our Aviva pension scheme.
- Up to 7% employer contributions dependent on matched contribution from employee.



Holidays and time off

- 28 days annual leave plus UK bank holidays (pro-rata for part-time employees).
- Entitlement rising to 29 days (pro-rata for part-time staff) after three years' service.
- Office closure between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day.
- Opportunity to carry over five days (pro-rata for part-time employees) into the following annual leave year.
- Support for external volunteering including two paid volunteering days.
- Enhanced occupational maternity, paternity, adoption, and shared parental leave policies and time off for IVF/fertility appointments.



Family life and work

- Enhanced occupational maternity, paternity, adoption, and shared parental leave policies and time off for IVF/ fertility appointments.
- Flexible working options to support those with caring responsibilities.



Community, ED&I and Employee wellbeing

- Opportunity to join our staff ED&I Action Group with representation from across the organisation.
- Access to mental health first aiders.
- Regular team socials (remote and in-person) and staff away days.
- Access to our 24/7, confidential employee assistance programme through Health Assured.

Flexible working

- Hybrid working, with a requirement of one to two days per week working in our London office and the option to work from home for the rest of the week. (Policy to be reviewed and we may move to majority homeworking from March)
- Core hours of 10.00am to 4.00pm to enable flexibility within the workday to accommodate individual preferences.
- Provision of equipment needed to work comfortably at home and on the move.
- Flexible working options to support those with caring responsibilities.



Health

- Free eye test every two years and contribution towards cost of any glasses required due to work.
- Generous paid sick leave based on service.
- Life assurance.



Diversity, equity and inclusion

Our commitments

Think Ahead are proud to be an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to embedding equity, diversity and inclusion in everything we do. As an organisation, we strive to create and promote a diverse, inclusive, safe and supportive working environment for everyone. Together, we champion a shared commitment to building a workplace culture that embraces diversity of thought and different experiences and where every individual feels valued, respected and empowered to be themselves.

As part of our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, our ambition is to become a truly anti-racist organisation and maximise the value of our resources to help us achieve racial equity in our organisation and throughout our work in mental health social work.

We are transparent about what needs to change; we regularly update and engage colleagues but also publish on our website what we have achieved and what we want to do next. We've worked hard to make improvements to our processes and have plans to keep building on our progress so far.

Recruitment processes

We are committed to continuously improving our recruitment processes to make them as inclusive as possible. We use non-gendered language from job packs and ensure our person specifications are skills-based rather than qualifications-based as much as possible. We always do our best to accommodate reasonable adjustments where they are needed to participate fully in the recruitment process and will work with you to find out how we can best support you.

Employer accreditations

We have made a number of other commitments including being a living wage employer and a commitment to being a disability confident employer. We are also a member of the Employer's Network for Equality and Inclusion.



Our recruitment process

Below you'll find some guidance and tips for the recruitment and selection process.

Guidance on completing your application

Please provide a CV and a supporting statement (max 2 pages) outlining your fit for the role based on the person specification and email these to hr@thinkahead.org. Please also fill in our [equal opportunities form](#).

It is a good idea to address the criteria from the person specification and provide examples to demonstrate how your experience and skillset is a good fit for the role, and for Think Ahead specifically. We're also interested in hearing how you embody the Think Ahead values and how you demonstrate these through your experience and skills.

Don't forget other relevant experience outside work that may contribute to meeting the person specification, such as community, voluntary, and other interests. Describe any relevant skills this experience has helped you develop. Remember, it is your skills and abilities relevant to this job that we are looking for. Focus on ensuring you meet the essential criteria in the person specification.

Next stages of the selection process

Shortlisting

Once the vacancy has closed, our hiring panel will review your application, assess you against the person specification for the role, and determine your suitability for the position. We regret that we cannot respond individually to all applicants due to the high number of applications we receive. If you have not been contacted within 2 weeks of the closing date, please assume that you have not been shortlisted for interview.

Interview & Assessment

Interviews will usually be held virtually via Teams. Our interviews involve a combination of job-related behavioural and situational questions to better understand your capabilities and prior experiences as well as what you are looking for in your next role.

Our interview panels always consist of at least two people, and we are committed to having a member of our [Lived Experience Partnership](#) on the panel where possible. If we require you to prepare a presentation for your interview, we will provide you with the brief and details upon confirming your interview slot, ensuring that you have adequate time to prepare it.

Interview tasks

You may be asked to complete a short task before your interview, the details of which will vary depending on the role you applied for. In the event that this applies to your role, you will be sent information on the task and provided with a window of time to complete at your own pace. Our written tasks assess the skills and competencies needed to be successful in the role, so bear that in mind when you complete it.

Interview Preparation

In preparation for your interview, we recommend doing some research into who we are and what we do, as well as researching our organisational values. The interview is your chance to show us why you want to work here but it is also your opportunity to interview us and determine if we are a good fit for you; so, come prepared with any questions you want to ask us.

The legal bits and providing feedback

References

We will only collect details for referees where we have offered you a role with us and, will confirm this with you before contacting them directly. At least one referee must be known to you in a work capacity, having line managed you.

Reasonable adjustments

We're committed to ensuring that everyone can participate fully in the process, so if you need some adjustments made to do so, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate where possible.

Feedback & unsuccessful candidates

Your details will remain on file for 6 months after you have applied for a position with us. After 6 months, they will be removed in line with GDPR.

If you are unsuccessful at interview stage, we'll be able to offer you feedback via a call with the hiring manager. Unfortunately, due to high volumes of applications received, we're not able to provide feedback to those who aren't shortlisted to the interview stage.



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The Think Ahead Organisation is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.
Charity number: 1166577. Company number: 10015893.