



Working as an Independent Social Worker for CF Social Work

CF Social Work are consistently searching for highly qualified independent social workers to join our team and undertake Specialist Assessments on behalf of the company. Any social worker who is registered with Social Work England can apply to join our team as an Independent Assessor, sometimes referred to as an Expert Social Worker.

However, before applying, please be aware that as well as providing specialist assessments, ISW's are often required to give expert evidence in court, therefore it is essential that CFSW recruit social workers with a wealth of experience and knowledge in complex childcare cases and those who are familiar with court processes. We would always ask for at least 5 years post qualifying experience, although most of our team have over 10 years' experience of child protection and assessment.

CF Social Work have over 15 years' experience of delivering high-quality assessments on behalf of Local Authorities, Courts and Legal Representatives. We have a rigorous quality assurance process which ensures that each and every report maintains the standard we have historically provided to our commissioners and referrers, maintaining our reputation as leading providers in this field. This gives new ISW's joining CFSW confidence that their work will be reviewed before submission, which would not be the case if working outside of an agency.

As an Independent Social Worker you would maintain your self-employed status, whilst being commissioned by us to undertake assessments on an individual case basis. Our Referrals and Logistics Team would match any case to reflect your specific knowledge and skills, so it is

essential that you highlight these to us. For example whether you are PAMs trained; have particular experience and training in mental health; child sexual exploitation; drugs and alcohol etc.

Benefits of Working as an ISW

Many social workers chose to become Locum's or agency social workers, meaning that they remain self-employed, but sign up with a recruitment agency acting on behalf of the local authority or other organisation who have recruitment issues.

This is not to be confused with an Independent Social Worker, as the roles are very different. Social Workers working for agencies undertake generic social work, ISW's are instructed solely for their assessment skills and ability and their experience of giving expert opinion in court.

ISW's are never case responsible, as the Local Authority Social Worker in the case maintains this status throughout the course of the commissioned work.

Some social workers chose to maintain their full or part time positions as LA Social Workers, whilst undertaking Independent Social Work Assessments in their free time. CF Social Work are happy to consider this group, but please note that ISW's working a dual role, i.e. still employed by the LA, will not be able to accept work within the borough that they are employed. Ensure that you check this out with your line manager at your place of employment.

On the whole, most ISW's who join CFSW have already made the 'leap' from employed to self-employed working and approach us purely as independent assessors who are experts in specific areas of social work.

Often fully Independent social workers speak about the flexibility the role offers them and the work/life balance of self-employment often suits social workers with young families or those who have slowed down from front line social work and wish to work at their own pace.

Our quality assurance team are always available to offer advice and support and provide valuable reassurance at the end of the process by checking all documents to ensure that standards are maintained and that the report is balanced and analytical before being sent off to the referrer.

Autonomy

Independent social work offers autonomy to individuals who are in theory their 'own boss'.

Accepting assessments that match your particular skill provides an opportunity to champion skills acquired through training and experience and offers job satisfaction which is often not enjoyed by busy social workers in employed local authority positions.

Many social workers would have been concerned during the Covid19 Pandemic and due to the restrictions placed on us and the risks involved, unable to operate. At CF Social Work we were able to overcome the restrictions of the pandemic by supporting our ISW's to work from home and undertake assessments via social media wherever possible. Reports were written up from their home and interviews undertaken via zoom or teams.

In case of high risk, where it was necessary to visit families directly; CFSW provided full PPE to all staff and provided a 24/7 support helpline.

Earning Potential

Money is often not a key driver for most social workers; particularly since Covid19 when many of our new ISW's speak of purely wanting to 'make a difference'. However, at CFSW we value

our assessors and wish to reward them appropriately for the high level of skills and experience that they bring to our team. Therefore, the hourly rate for an Independent Social Worker is much higher than that available to employed social workers.

Whilst some ISW's wish to just 'top up' their salary or are retired and wish to work for 'luxuries', the ISW's who undertake the role more fully enjoy a high earning potential. This earning potential reflects the experience they bring to the field of independent social work.

Clearly being able to accept a higher number of assessments and submitting these in a timely way, will assist your earning potential.

Self-Employment

As an Independent Social Worker, whether as a Sole Trader or a Limited Company, you will be running your own business and as such you must register as self-employed with HMRC.

CFSW would NOT be responsible for any contributions towards NI, Income Tax or Pensions. These are totally the responsibility of the ISW.

Further as a self-employed member of the team, whilst you will be afforded some level of support and guidance, you would not be required to attend regular supervision or formal training, as this is your own responsibility. That said, you would be informally invited to any training or events that CFSW may hold and would be guided throughout each piece of work by a senior social worker who would also provide quality assurance.

Many highly skilled ISW's who join CFSW offer training in their own right. Therefore, there may be occasions when CFSW ask to commission training directly from this group of people.

CV's

When completing your CV, it is imperative that you fully outline your experience and training. The more skills and experience you are able to demonstrate as an assessor, the more likely you are to be chosen by commissioners and referrers.

When an enquiry is made, we are often asked to provide CV's for 2 or 3 ISW's matched to the case; it is therefore important that your CV shines above the rest. For example, make sure that your CV reflects your experience as an assessor; including a rough outline of how many assessments you have undertaken in child protection cases; how experienced you are giving evidence etc. This information needs to be at the top of your CV, visible to those reading it and seeking to match the most suitable ISW to their case.

The more experience you can demonstrate with respect to Parenting Assessments; SGO's Connected Persons; PAMs; Sibling Assessments; etc, the more likely you will be to be offered work.

When completing your CV, be aware that ISWs are considered 'experts' in the field and, as such, you will be required to have an understanding of relevant legislation such as The Mental Health Act 1983 and The Children Act 1989 as well as key government guidance such as 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. Legislation and guidance will need to be referenced in your expert reports appropriately to ensure that they are evidence-based.

It is also important that you can evidence up to date training relevant to children's services issues i.e. Child sexual exploitation; county lines, modern slavery, drugs and alcohol etc and that you are committed to improving your social work skills and knowledge.

Referrers will look out for strong references from relevant or previous employers as these reflect what you are stating in your CV.

Autonomy

Whilst you will be afforded some level of support and guidance from our experienced social work team, you will be expected to work autonomously as a self-employed ISW.

You will be required to manage your time effectively and ensure that all deadlines are met, as set out in your initial contract for the work. CFSW have a long-standing excellent reputation of reaching deadlines and it is therefore imperative that you help us to maintain this reputation.

Our Expectation of your Reports

CFSW offer a robust quality assurance process and you must be aware that your reports will be subject of scrutiny, despite your years of experience. This is to ensure that our high standards are always kept and that your reports are well balanced; fair and analytical.

However, whilst our experienced quality assurance consultants will quality assure your work, we also have an expectation that, as an experienced worker, your reports will demonstrate excellent written skills and that you have paid due attention to grammar. Any report which is sent to us substandard i.e. badly written; incorrect use of template or font; poor grammar etc, will be returned to you and if not adequately addressed, could result in a reduction in payment.

More importantly, failure to address these issues in the presentation of your report, could cause a delay for the court, which would not reflect well on either the ISW or CFSW.

Why Chose an Agency like CFSW When going Independent?

Often when ISW's make the leap from full or part time employment to self-employment, they have financial worries, i.e. how will I get work; how long will it take to get paid for my assessments etc. By choosing to be commissioned by CFSW, whilst we cannot guarantee

regular work, we do have a long and established history as reputable providers of assessments and as such we receive regular work from hundreds of referrers throughout the Country. On that basis, we are confident that, if your work is of a high standard, we will be able to keep you busy.

Another worry for independent workers is cash flow; chasing payment. A benefit of working under the CFSW umbrella therefore, is that once your report has been submitted together with your invoice, we will make payment 30 days later. This is despite the fact that we may not have been paid by the referrer. Therefore, the issue of 'chasing payment' is eliminated for you.

As an ISW you will be required to undertake your own business administration and will be responsible for all your own tax returns; i.e. keep a record of all work carried out; invoices; expenses etc. However, our team at CF can assist you with any queries you may have in this respect and could provide examples and templates to assist you. CFSW can also recommend accountants to help with this process if required.

Applying to become an ISW with CF Social Work

At CF Social Work we have a rolling programme of recruitment for ISW's and other expert assessors. You can apply via our Jobs Page at www.cfsocialwork.co.uk or simply give us a ring on 01473 725994 and ask for Diana Houlder, who manages the ISW project.

All interviews are undertaken by senior social workers, together with Diana who will answer any queries you may have regarding the post. If you are suitable for the role and are happy to accept an independent post with CFSW, the compliance process will commence and you will be required to provide a number of essential documents i.e. qualifications and training; personal proof of identity etc. You will also be required to complete a new DBS application or update on the DBS system to reflect a role within CFSW.

Finally

Becoming an independent social worker is a personal choice, but we believe that by choosing to work with CFSW, we can make the transition easier for you.

Your success going forward is dependent on your ability to maintain a high standard of report writing and showcasing your experience, skills and knowledge. However, the area of independent social work is extremely specialist; therefore in order for us to safeguard you and our company, we would reiterate that you must have at least 5 years post qualifying experience and a history of child protection and giving evidence in court before applying for an ISW post with CF.

We very much look forward to working with you.