

Job Description & Person Specification

Head of Influence, Insight and Communications

Job Title: Head of Influence, Insight and Communications
Contract: Permanent
Hours: Full-Time
Location: Hybrid, easy access to Hammersmith and Westminster
Reporting to: Director of Play in Healthcare (dotted line to Director of Income Generation & Engagement)

People Management Responsibilities:

Policy and Public Affairs Manager
Insight and Impact Manager
Communications and Brand Manager

External consultants/agencies as required

1st Interview: 12th October 2026

2nd Interview: 14th October 2026

The role will close at 9am on Monday 5th October. We will consider applications on a rolling basis so encourage you to apply early.

About Starlight

Starlight is the national charity for children's play in healthcare.

We believe that healthcare should be a more humane and child-centred experience for every child. We work across the UK to champion the importance of play during treatment, care and recovery, supporting children, parents and carers, and healthcare professionals.

Play is integral to children's wellbeing. It can help children experience greater agency, autonomy and control during healthcare, express thoughts and feelings, build resilience and make healthcare settings feel more welcoming and safe. But play is still too often overlooked or treated as an optional extra within children's healthcare.

Our ambition is to end preventable trauma in children's healthcare.

Our new strategy is taking Starlight into an important next phase. We want to build on the expertise, evidence, influence, partnerships and brand positioning we have developed over recent years and use them to create greater impact for children and families.

That means becoming a stronger voice for change: increasing understanding of children's experiences of healthcare, influencing the systems and people who shape children's healthcare, strengthening our relationships with supporters and partners, and communicating with greater clarity, consistency and impact.

Our brand and communications have an increasingly important and broad role to play. We need to tell powerful stories, challenge assumptions, engage people emotionally and intellectually, and make it clear why children's healthcare needs to change.

This is an exciting time to join Starlight and help shape how our purpose, personality and ambition are experienced by the people who matter most.

Our Culture

We believe our success depends on focusing on our purpose and results, while taking individual responsibility for building a culture where everyone can belong, feel safe and thrive.

Our values set the standards for our behaviour and are central to our decision-making and the choices we make.

We believe our strength lies in our differences, and we continually work towards an authentic workplace culture where equity, diversity and inclusion are central principles.

OUR VALUES

"Our standards and the environment we create through our behaviours"



All Starlight colleagues are expected to live and demonstrate Starlight's Purpose & Values. In this role, this includes:

- **Child centred:** Passionate alignment with Starlight's purpose, keeping the needs, rights and experiences of children at the heart of all decision making.

- **Working Together For Our Purpose:** Working constructively across all teams and with partners, seeking diverse perspectives, expertise and understanding organisational priorities
- **Trusted To Be Our Best:** Using resources wisely, being aware of own impact and preferences
- **Responding To The World Around Us:** Uses insight and evidence to inform decisions and drive improvement
- **Taking the Time to Understand:** Desire and ability to ask questions and listen to further understanding and benefit self, others and Starlight

Background

Over the last six years, as Starlight has transitioned from a wish-granting charity, we have deliberately invested in senior specialist expertise to establish new areas of work, strengthen our evidence base, increase our policy influence and develop the strategy that will guide our future. These investments have enabled the organisation to mature significantly, building strong capability across specialist functions and advancing our role as a thought leader for play in healthcare.

As we enter the next phase of Starlight's development, with our new strategy to end preventable trauma for children in healthcare, our focus is on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of our influencing work. Our aim is to build on our strong existing capability, bringing together complementary specialist teams to create greater strategic impact, stronger external influence and an even more integrated approach to delivering our mission.

This new Influence, Insight and Communications role brings together the existing influencing, insight and communications teams, recognising the significant overlap between strategic communications, public affairs, campaigns, insight and organisational influence. The role will provide strategic leadership across these disciplines, enabling Starlight to connect research, lived experience, policy engagement and communications around organisational priorities, and maximise our external impact.

The role will sit within the Play in Healthcare team, reflecting the shift in emphasis of our communications and marketing activity towards influencing, campaigning and systems change. It plays a critical part in making children's experiences visible, amplifying the voices of children and families, and building understanding of why emotionally safe healthcare matters.

Reporting to the Director of Play in Healthcare, and working closely with the Director of Income Generation & Engagement, the postholder will bring together Starlight's existing expertise in influence, insight and communications to translate evidence and lived experience into compelling narratives, policy positions, thought leadership and strategic communications that strengthen Starlight's reputation, influence decision-makers and support organisational growth. The postholder will identify, shape and amplify opportunities to position Starlight as a trusted voice on children's healthcare experiences and the role of play in supporting children's wellbeing, development and emotional safety.

Key Areas of Responsibility

1. Influence and Public Affairs

- Lead the delivery and further development of Starlight's influencing agenda, building on existing expertise, relationships and opportunities.
- Identify, develop and maximise opportunities to influence policy, practice and public understanding in relation to children's healthcare experiences, emotional wellbeing and play.
- Develop evidence-based policy positions, consultation responses, briefings and reports.
- Build and maintain relationships with:
 - NHS organisations
 - Health professional bodies
 - Policymakers
 - Parliamentarians
 - Sector partners
 - Researchers and academics
- Anticipate external developments and advise colleagues on emerging opportunities, risks and implications for Starlight.
- Represent Starlight externally where appropriate.

2. Strategic Insight and Evidence

- Lead Starlight's insight and participation strategy, ensuring research, evaluation and lived experience activities support our influencing and organisational priorities and inform opportunities for greater impact.
- Develop and oversee an evidence and insight programme that:
 - Deepens understanding of children's healthcare experiences.
 - Generates evidence to support systems change ambitions.
 - Identifies inequalities, barriers and opportunities for improvement.
 - Demonstrates the impact of Starlight's work.
 - Supports fundraising, influencing and partnership development.
- Ensure children's and families' voices remain central to all research, participation and influencing activity.
- Translate research findings and insight into practical recommendations, compelling narratives and opportunities to influence different audiences.

3. Narrative and Thought Leadership

- Shape and communicate Starlight's role as a leading voice in improving children's experiences of healthcare.
- Develop narratives that connect:

- Children's lived experiences
- Evidence and insight
- Healthcare quality
- Emotional wellbeing
- Play and development
- Support the CEO and senior colleagues with speeches, presentations, reports and external engagement.
- Identify opportunities for Starlight to contribute to national conversations and sector debates, and work with colleagues to develop and maximise those opportunities.

4. Strategic Communications

- Lead the development and delivery of an integrated communications strategy that supports organisational objectives.
- Ensure communications build on Starlight's strong existing profile to strengthen thought leadership, influence and reputation.
- Oversee:
 - Media relations
 - Content strategy
 - Publications and reports
 - Social media
 - Campaigns
- Ensure communications are informed by evidence and lived experience.
- Work closely with colleagues across the organisation to identify, shape and amplify opportunities, insight and stories that influence key audiences and support organisational priorities.

5. Organisational Leadership

- Lead, support and develop a talented team of specialists, creating the conditions for colleagues to bring their expertise to their best effect, connect their thinking across disciplines and maximise their collective impact.
- Contribute as a member of the Senior Management Team.
- Manage budgets, resources and external suppliers effectively.

Embed evaluation, learning and continuous improvement across the function.

Person Specification

Requirement	Essential	Desirable
Significant senior experience across a combination of strategic communications, campaigns and influencing, policy and public affairs, and/or research and insight, with	Y	

the ability to bring these disciplines together to achieve strategic impact. Ability to represent Starlight as a compelling speaker and influencer ○ Strategic communications ○ Campaigns and influencing ○ Policy and public affairs ○ Research and insight Ability to represent Starlight as a compelling speaker and influencer		
Experience of translating evidence and complex information into compelling communications using multi-channels	Y	
Strong understanding of how research, policy and communications can work together to influence change	Y	
Excellent written and verbal communication skills.	Y	
Experience managing senior stakeholders and partnerships	Y	
Strong analytical and strategic thinking skills, with the judgement to identify opportunities, assess their potential and turn them into effective influencing and communications activity.	Y	
Ability to work across organisational boundaries and influence without formal authority.	Y	
Strong coaching and empowering leadership skills, with the ability to lead a team of experts, connect specialist expertise and enable colleagues to do their best work.	Y	
Knowledge of children's healthcare, child wellbeing, disability, health inequalities or children's rights.		Y
Experience involving people with lived experience in research, participation or influencing activity.		Y
Experience working with healthcare, public policy or public service systems.	Y	
Understanding of systems change, implementation or social change approaches.		Y

Please note: This job description is non-exhaustive and is subject to review with the post holder. Reasonable amendments may be made in line with the needs of the organisation.

What we offer

The opportunity and environment to be yourself and be your best. To have flexibility in where you work and the hours that you work. To join in beyond your role with our children and families at events and activities. To work within a team with play at its heart.

A competitive salary and benefits package including ability to work flexibly between home and office, holiday entitlement of 25 days plus bank holidays increasing up to 30 days with service, office closed at Christmas in addition to holiday entitlement, matched pension contributions to 5%, life assurance, Vitality health cover, cycle to work scheme, season ticket loans.

To apply

Please apply for this role through Charity Job with your CV accompanied by a supporting statement which demonstrates how your experience matches the person specification and highlights your most relevant, recent experience for this role. In your application, we'd love to hear about what inspires you about Starlight's purpose, beliefs and values with a statement that is very personal to you and gives us an insight into who you are, and how you would contribute to Starlight's success with your experience, expertise and approach.

The role will close at 9am on Monday 5th October and we are actively recruiting for this post on a rolling basis, allocation for interviews may happen as candidates apply, which may be before the interview dates stated above. As we may interview before these dates, we reserve the right to close the role earlier if we receive a number of high-quality applications.

Additional Information

Diversity Policy Statement

We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with consideration and respect. Starlight is committed to achieving a truly inclusive environment for all by developing better working relationships that release the full potential, creativity, and productivity of each individual. We aim to ensure that all our colleagues, volunteers, donors, partners, contractors, and the public are treated fairly. This will be regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender transition, marital or civil partnership status, ethnicity, disability, medical status, age, religion or belief, political opinion, social or economic status, or ex-offender status. Starlight actively welcomes candidates from diverse backgrounds. If you are invited to an interview and need any adjustments made or have particular access needs, please let us know at that stage.

Shortlisting

Starlight is an equal opportunities employer, and we are committed to ensuring all applications are treated fairly. All applications are subject to our shortlisting process; if you are shortlisted, we will contact you and invite you to attend an interview on or before the dates in this document, please let us know on application if you have any difficulty with the dates. You will also be advised at this point if there will be any skills test, presentations etc.

We may appoint to the role before the stated closing date if a suitable candidate is identified.

Employment Checks

All offers of employment are made subject to the following criteria: proof of eligibility to work in the UK, proof of residency and satisfactory employment screening, a DBS check and two most recent references.