



**Role:** Casework Advocate

**Hours:** 28 hours per week across 4 days (to include Friday for staff meetings)

**Salary:** £30,362.85 pro-rata (£24,290.28 for 4-day week)

**Reports to:** Casework Coordinator

**Please read the Job Description and the Person Specification in the light of the context in which this post is based and our models of work.**

**We would like to encourage people with lived experience of seeking asylum to apply for the role of Casework Advocate. If you have lived experience of seeking asylum but feel you do not meet all the stated required criteria below, we would strongly encourage you to apply, and your application will be considered. We value lived experience highly and offer access to external training and internal support to help the post holder develop in areas of the role where they may have little/no experience.**

### **Casework Advocate Job Description**

The role of the Baobab Casework Advocate is to provide care and support for our community of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children and young people. An 'advocate' is someone who supports another to express their views and wishes, to stand up for their rights, to enable one to make choices and access opportunities, while understanding the individual's vulnerability and need. As Casework Advocate you will work within our multidisciplinary team to provide the intensive support required, identify indicators of risk and safeguard young people from significant harm.

#### **Mental Health**

As Casework Advocate you will understand the impact of specific human rights abuses on the development of children and young people in exile and their individual experiences of loss, trauma and grief on their mental health and well-being. All the young people Baobab supports suffer significant mental health and developmental difficulties and many function in an unstable and more immature way than their chronological age. Due to their experiences, it takes time to gain trust from the young people in our community.

#### **Baobab's Model**

It is our experience that it takes a significant amount of time to understand Baobab's model of working, which aims for rehabilitation and justice through attending to both the internal and external world of each young person (see more detail in accompanying 'Baobab Model' document). It is critical that as a Casework Advocate you strive to have an insight to the experiences of both the internal and external factors impacting on the lives of unaccompanied young people attending our centre. It is also critical you understand the ways in which UK society and policy impacts on young asylum seekers (including invisibility, marginalisation, discrimination and the fact of waiting in uncertainty for a long time)

## **Multi-disciplinary Working**

A key aspect of the role is communicating with members of the team at Baobab and building relationships with other workers in the networks around each young person including social workers, teachers, foster carers, lawyers, clinicians in hospitals and community settings. Baobab aims to be a reflective, thinking organisation and we place a high value on shared thinking time, sharing responsibilities and working together with others who have a key role in relation to each young person both within and outside of Baobab.

## **Accessing rights and entitlements**

The Casework Advocate supports community members to better understand the context in which they are living and how to access appropriate care, rights and entitlements. This involves working closely with each young person's Key Work Clinician, and together strengthening relationships with external networks and developing holistic support plans to meet identified needs. As a Casework Advocate you must be prepared to challenge certain decisions and practices by external agencies where required for the welfare of the young person. The role involves supporting young people to initiate legal challenges when necessary and advocating on young person's behalf where they are unable to.

## **Working towards independence**

A key component of the role is to empower individuals to communicate their views, needs and experiences and participate in decision making processes. You will encourage young people to develop their level of knowledge and skills to enable their independence and progression towards their aspirations. Many of the young people Baobab supports find the task of taking responsibility for their own lives and making choices hugely challenging.

## **Main Responsibilities and Tasks**

### **1. Direct casework**

**1.1** Provide face-to-face casework advocacy support to young people who are located across London. Casework must be in a language of their choice, utilising translators where required and ensuring the young person's mental health and wellbeing are the primary focus.

**1.2** Casework advocacy may include navigating and applying for relevant benefits, support in homeless assessments, assisting with college and university applications and enrolments, attending GP and health specialist appointments, preparing applications for home office asylum support and meeting with local authority social care teams regarding care and pathway plans.

**1.3** Preparing letters and reports, in partnership with Baobab Clinical team, which provide evidence to contribute to statutory assessments and legal challenges where appropriate. Ensure reports provide detailed information about young person's mental health and wellbeing, specific symptoms, the impacts on their day-to-day functioning and any significant risk of harm

**1.4** Engage in outreach support by visiting young people in their accommodation, their local area and being available to attend a variety of meetings as an independent advocate to ensure voices are heard and actions are followed up.

**1.5** Complete individual grant applications to secure resources which may be relevant to supporting young person's mental health and wellbeing such as education items, sports, leisure and arts activities.

**1.6** Signpost and refer young people to local organisations, diverse opportunities and cultural activities and events which support their needs and interests.

## **2. Multidisciplinary Team Working**

1. Work alongside the young person's Key Work Clinician and wider team at Baobab to assess needs, develop personal support plans and participate in 6 monthly case reviews with the young person and their networks.
2. Active participation in meetings with the Baobab multidisciplinary team of professionals (clinicians, social workers, caseworkers and administrators), and attend meetings with external professional networks connected to young people and their communities.
3. Meet fortnightly with the Casework Coordinator to monitor caseload, reflect on practice and identify areas for professional development.
4. Contribute to Baobab's advocacy work, practice evaluation and research by providing case studies, encouraging young people's contributions, identifying examples of good practice and highlighting areas for improvement.

## **Community Model**

1. To practice as a part of our holistic and integrated model of working, adhering to Baobab policy and procedures such as for example those relating to safeguarding, child and young adult protection and confidentiality.
2. Maintaining a focus on the core aim of Baobab being a human rights organisation promoting rehabilitation and justice as a multidisciplinary team functioning as a non-residential therapeutic community.
3. Responsibility to participate as a member of the Baobab community by developing and attending community activities along with other staff members and young people with a focus on ensuring that the voices and lived experience of our community members are held in mind.
4. Encourage and support young people to attend their clinical sessions, groupwork sessions and to attend community meetings and arranged activities.

## **Advocacy**

1. To keep updated about the current socio-political context in which we work, including changes in law which would affect our community and our work with young asylum seekers in the UK and changing patterns of refugee producing countries and specific detail of organized and interpersonal violence in the countries from which our Baobab community members originate.
2. To continue to develop understandings of the particular reasons why young people might be forced to leave their home countries and move into exile.
3. To build and share knowledge in relation to welfare rights, housing, support and community care issues wherever possible with the Baobab team and across networks.
4. To attend internal and trainings in relation to our holistic and integrated models of work and participate in external training opportunities to develop understanding of the specific needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors seeking asylum in the UK, their experiences of violence in their home countries and on their journeys into exile, the often long-term impact on mental health and wellbeing and how to support access rights and entitlements.

## **PERSON SPECIFICATIONS**

*We would like to encourage people with lived experience of being an asylum seeker to apply for the role of Casework Advocate. If you feel you may not meet the stated criteria below, we suggest that you still submit an application for consideration as we aim to offer access to training and support for the role.*

Please provide practical examples to demonstrate how you meet the following criteria.

## **Essential qualifications, skills and experience**

Relevant qualification and/ or in related area of welfare rights, mental health, social care, or community youth work

- At least 2 years post qualifying work experience as a caseworker, advocating and supporting young people to access appropriate care, rights and entitlements
- Experience of direct, face to face outreach work with young people experiencing complex mental health needs and developmental difficulties, with a deep understanding of the impact on their daily functioning and self-care.
- Knowledge and understanding of key international agreements, national legislation and statutory guidance relevant to the care and protection of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children and young people.
- Experience of building relationships and working together with multi-disciplinary professional networks and key organisations responsible for supporting children and young people, especially local authorities and home office departments.
- Proven computer literacy skills and organisational abilities.
- Ability to keep detailed records and adhere to organisational policies and procedures
- Ability to make use of team meetings, individual and group supervisions
- Ability to maintain a flexible, creative and safe approach to assessing and meeting the needs of our population of young people.

## **Desirable skills and experience**

- Lived experience as an asylum-seeker/ refugee and/or personal experience of the UK social care system.
- Experience of casework with unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Direct experience of advocacy and promoting justice and rehabilitation for unaccompanied young people seeking asylum and refugee status.
- Ability to speak English and a second language compatible to diverse languages spoken by children and young people attending the Baobab Centre.

## **Challenges of the Post**

The biggest challenges of the post are twofold:

- 1) To be flexible enough to adapt to a regularly changing context for children and young people seeking asylum and to be able to challenge poor decision making, respond to crisis and manage risk appropriately
- 2) To work in a team with many part-time staff and maintain good communication and team working at all times

## **Hours and Schedule**

The Casework Advocate role is for 4 days per week. Friday is mandatory due to all staff meetings which occur on this day. The other two days can be flexible according to your schedule. We would expect this role to be primarily office based with weekly outreach in the community, rather than being based at home. Two days will be dedicated to direct work with young people and one day you will provide support on our Casework Duty Rota. As Casework Advocate you would be expected to work regular hours and to sometimes attend evening and weekend meetings; including our monthly community meetings which take place on alternate evenings once a month. For any work outside of agreed hours, time off in lieu can be agreed with your line manager.

## **Support and Opportunities**

All staff at Baobab have the opportunity to apply to our training fund (of up to £100 per course) once their 6-month probationary period has been completed. We encourage personal development and any opportunities for learning will be discussed with your line manager.

You will have one-to-one and group supervision sessions with your line manager along with external casework supervision to support the clinical issues of the work. You will additionally be expected to join monthly reflective meetings with the wider multidisciplinary staff team which provides an opportunity to share the challenges of the context in which Baobab works, the stories which you will be exposed to and to encourage working together in our holistic and integrated model.