



Job Description & Person Specification

Job Title: Play Specialist Programme Manager
Contract: Fixed Term until March 2026
Hours: Part time (15 hours per week)
Location: Flexible, with time in the London (Hammersmith) Office and some UK travel
Salary: £37,000 - £40,000 per annum pro-rata plus benefits

About Starlight

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

We support children to experience the power of play during treatment, care and recovery from illness in more than 600 healthcare settings across the UK. Play is integral to the wellbeing of children and can make hospitals and hospices feel more welcoming, safe and a good place to thrive, ensuring children live every day even when they are sick. We know that the highest attainable standard of health can only be realised if children are supported to engage in play in hospital.

Play is often overlooked or trivialised in the healthcare system, and play professionals are often undervalued and under resourced despite the contribution they make to children's wellbeing and the efficiencies they deliver in the NHS. Play is a vital way children gain agency in their treatment, a sense of autonomy and control; and is an important way to express thoughts and feelings in a healthcare setting.

We believe that children's healthcare services should fully reflect the importance of play to their health, wellbeing, resilience and recovery, and that every child who is an inpatient should have daily play opportunities, appropriate to their condition, supported by dedicated play staff. We aim to enable all children in the UK to have their right to play protected and provided for when they are receiving healthcare – in or out of hospital.

Our Culture

We believe that our success depends upon focusing on our purpose and business results and taking individual responsibility for a culture where everyone can belong, feel safe and thrive. Our values are the agreed standards that govern our behaviour and are central to our decision-making and the choices that we make. Our development programme focuses on individual awareness of our own values, strengths, and preferences – what makes us who we are – to help all colleagues think for themselves, manage their environment, and make appropriate, balanced decisions for themselves, others and Starlight. We believe that our strength is in our differences and constantly strive towards an authentic workplace culture with equity, diversity, and inclusion as central principles.




OUR VALUES

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



Responding to the world around us

We are inspired by the changes in the world around us. We have the freedom and courage to try something new, always learning and adapting to people's needs. It means trying stuff out, seeing what happens and pushing our boundaries.




Working together for our purpose

We aim high, think big, are imaginative and curious in everything we do. We celebrate our achievements, and we help and support each other when challenges come. We all play our part in our purpose and have fun along the way.



Taking the time to understand

We take the time to understand ourselves and our impact. We actively listen, seeking to learn and understand from everyone's experiences in life. We are open to the opportunities and possibilities this awareness brings to ourselves, others, and Starlight.



Trusted to be our best

The trust we have in each other, and our purpose guides our decisions, choices, and actions. When we are trusted our confidence grows, we ask for help, and we feel safe to be who we are. In any situation we say 'we' rather than 'they'. Most of all we trust in the Power of Play for children and adults alike.

Our Strategy and the Play Specialist Programme Manager

We know how much difference a Health Play Specialist can make to children who are seriously ill and for a lot of hospitals and community healthcare settings these roles can fall by the wayside when budgets are critically tight. Our pilot Starlight Health Play Specialist project has now demonstrated the positive impact of play staff for babies, children and families. We've already learned so much and are designing an impact assessment tool with the practitioners. Although the setup of the project is done, there is lots of learning still to do and the manager of this work will facilitate and maximise this learning.

Starlight Health Play Specialists not only create the time, space and opportunity for children to play, whether that's for preparation for procedures, management of anxiety, entertainment during long periods of boredom or aiding recovery. They carry out on-the-ground research, measure impact of activities, sharing their learning with us and help us to really understand what makes a brilliant Health Play Specialist and develop standards and training. They are beacons of good practice, championing and protecting play in healthcare – and that is where you, our new Play Specialist Programme Manager, come in.

Reporting to our Head of Play, you'll support the ongoing success of the Programme, ensuring the Health Play Specialists have every opportunity to thrive in their organisations and influence the development of best practice standards. You'll have a deep appreciation for the value of play and particularly its importance within the healthcare system. Working closely with our Insight & Impact and Policy & Public Affairs teams, you'll be responsible for building and managing a framework of continual evaluation and feedback. You'll also work closely with our Fundraising team to increase funding opportunities for the programme.

The Starlight Health Play Specialists are employed, and line managed by their healthcare settings. You'll support their work and their development, using your own experience and



ours, as well as our extensive research and insight work, to ensure they have maximum impact on the children they work with. You'll be flexible in approach to management and able to work within the sometimes rigid requirements of healthcare settings.

As a Starlight Manager, you'll be committed to development, both for yourself and those around you. You'll manage your own environment by constantly listening, responding and adapting. You will believe in the value of giving and receiving feedback as helpful information for us all to continually grow, and consciously make appropriate, balanced decisions for yourself, others and Starlight.

You will need to be able to travel regularly, particularly between London and Wales, to spend time with the Health Place Specialists in their places of work, as well as with the wider Starlight team in our London office. You will want to visit healthcare settings in other parts of the country at times, too, to share knowledge and expertise with their play teams and senior leaders.

Key Areas of Responsibility

As our Play Specialist Programme Manager, you'll:

- Successfully lead, manage, evaluate, and develop the Starlight HPS programme through a proactive, problem-solving approach aligned with Starlight's values and strategic priorities.
- Provide regular support and mentoring for the Starlight Health Play Specialists, working alongside the support mechanisms for HPS within their healthcare setting.
- Use insight from the Health Play Specialist Programme and from other areas of Starlight and beyond, to help create a best practice approach to play in healthcare settings.
- Raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of Play and the impact of great play provision on children's experiences among diverse audiences (for example: senior leaders, clinical staff, play staff, and conference or webinar audiences).
- Together with the Fundraising and Marketing team, identify and maximise fundraising and PR opportunities, demonstrating the impact of our work and illustrating the benefit of direct engagement with children and families.
- Identify learning and training needs and opportunities for Starlight's own and, where appropriate, other Health Play Specialists, signposting or coordinating opportunities.
- Identify and manage safeguarding risk in line with Starlight's and the healthcare settings' safeguarding policies.

Person specification

Requirement	Essential	Desirable	Evaluation*
Substantial experience and knowledge of play either as a qualified Health Play Specialist or equivalent knowledge and skills within Play.	√		A
Experience in identifying and coordinating learning and development needs and opportunities for health play specialist.		√	A/I



Good experience and knowledge of play services and the structure of play in health care settings with understanding of how the NHS operates and how to navigate within it	√		A/I
Demonstrable experience of leading and embedding play programmes, with excellent programme evaluation skills and the ability to implement improvements whilst balancing the needs of Starlight, the Health Play Specialist, and the healthcare setting.	√		A/I
Ability to build, nurture and influence relationships, clearly conveying the benefits of play in a health care setting with a range of key stakeholders.	√		I
Sound knowledge of the key principles in safeguarding children	√		A/I
Experience of identifying and maximising fundraising and PR opportunities.		√	I
Commitment to personal development and to being able to manage your own environment and make appropriate, balanced decisions for yourself, others, and Starlight.	√		I
Enjoy being part of a small team where individuals thrive on working outside of their designated roles from time to time to get things done.	√		I
Solid Microsoft Office skills and the ability to work with databases.	√		A

*I = tested at interview, A= tested via cv / supporting statement

What we offer

The opportunity and environment to be yourself and be your best. To work within a team with play at its heart. To have flexibility in where you work and the hours that you work. Personal development through our strengths and self-awareness Development Programme. 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, income protection, 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.



Role will close on the 8th November 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 staff, volunteers, donors, partners, contractors, and the public are treated fairly. This will be regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender, 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, enhanced DBS and two most recent references.