Job description

Job Title: Senior Researcher

Reporting to: Director of Products and Services

Department: Products and Services

Hours: 1 FTE (37.5 hours a week)

Salary: Specialist (£60k to £65k pa equivalent)

Contract: Fixed-term for up to nine months

Location: Remote (UK based with travel to schools)

Benefits: See details in the 'What it's like working at nurtureuk'.

We're looking for a researcher to work on a major innovation project for our charity. You'll be helping us build a new digital assessment tool for UK primary schools to use. Reporting to our Director of Products and Services, you'll develop and test a new observational assessment tool and exemplification materials that gives teachers unique insights so they can support the social and emotional development of Reception-age children. You'll review the current landscape, best practice and best-in-class instruments, develop and test a new assessment instrument and validate the instrument, working alongside schools and with our project team.

This role is perfect for someone with knowledge and research interest in early years, social and emotional development of children and assessment instruments, and who can work in an iterative way at pace.

About nurtureuk

Nurtureuk is the charity behind the movement to make nurture the norm and be at the heart of education. For many years we have helped schools remove the social and emotional barriers that stop children learning and limit their life chances, through a whole-school approach that makes sure every child can access education.

The need has never been greater. Amid a school attendance crisis, rising exclusion and widely misunderstood behaviour, more children than ever are being shut out of education before they have had a fair chance. We exist to change that, at scale. Through the Boxall Profile® and a growing range of tools, training and support, we give schools the evidence and methods to understand every child and help them flourish.

We are ambitious about our impact and honest about our performance. We think like a mission-driven organisation that measures what works, changes what does not and expects a lot of itself, because the children and young people we are here for deserve nothing less.

About the role

Main duties

This isn't an exhaustive list - you'll be expected to carry out any other reasonable duties consistent with the level and requirements of the project.

Understanding the current landscape

- Reviewing existing measures of young children's social and emotional development, including the Boxall Profile, and what makes them effective and reliable for teachers to use
- Research and synthesise findings on exemplification materials for early years practitioners

Working with partner schools to develop an effective, practical assessment tool

- Drafting and developing a new way of assessing social and emotional development
- Working with lead and partner schools to ground the tool in classroom practice and observation
- Developing exemplification materials that make the assessment practical and easy to use consistently
- Revising the tool iteratively in response to feedback and test results

Testing and validating the assessment tool

- Designing a practical research and test plan to test the new tool
- Securing ethical approval and handling of children's data safely, in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements
- Gathering evidence of reliability, including agreement between teachers, and of validity, including comparison with EYFS Profile and the Boxall Profile®
- Establishing age-related norms for interpreting results and ensuring the tool works fairly for different groups of children
- Working with partner schools to test the assessment tool and exemplification materials
- Writing up technical description and validation data into practitioner-friendly forms

Contributing to the team

- Working collaboratively with the project and nurtureuk team, including project manager, technical developer, project board and an educational psychologist
- Contribute to the products and services team and wider team using specialist knowledge

How we work - what high performance looks like

High performance at nurtureuk is not only about what you deliver, it is about how you deliver it. Everyone here is supported and assessed through our Performance and Development Framework, which is built around three things:

- **Deliver** - meaningful outcomes and achieved objectives, problems solved and services improved with commercial awareness and good use of resources
- **Develop** - continuous learning, seeking feedback, reflecting on experience, testing new ideas, learning from mistakes and building new skills and digital confidence
- **Contribute** - taking ownership, working collaboratively and building relationships across teams, sharing knowledge and role-modelling our behaviours

Whatever your role, these are the things we recruit for and the things we will help you grow.

Person specification

We know that no one arrives meeting every criteria and we are more interested in the right person than a perfect list. A genuine commitment to our mission is a given. On top of that,, we focus strongly on demonstrable capability.

Education, experience and knowledge:

Strong candidates should have all or most of the following:

Person Specification		
	Essential	Desirable
Professional/ Education Qualifications	• A professional with proven experience in the area of work outlined above • A master's degree or higher in in developmental, educational or child psychology, education or a related field	• A PhD or professional doctorate in one of these subjects
Experience	• Practical research related to child development and grounded in theory and practice • Developing or validating questionnaires, rating scales and other age-related assessments, including testing their reliability and validity	• Researching or using assessment instruments for social and emotional development • Knowledge of the development or use of standardised assessments and psychometrics

	• Quantitative analysis using statistical software, for example R or SPSS • Developing practical materials to explain a complex topic to non-specialists	• Working with early years practitioners • Working with UK schools • Using the Boxall Profile®
Deliver	• Works iteratively and at pace to develop materials • Confidently develops and carries out research plans • Develops materials for schools that are practical and useful • Confidently handles questions on validity of assessment tools • Engages schools and educators with warmth and empathy, speaking their language • Prioritises safeguarding and works ethically • Applies data protection and information security principles in the content of a complex technical project	• Understands how to approach uncertainty in an innovation project • Confidently works with technical developers to implement practical tools
Develop	• Learns continuously and applies it; • Actively seeks feedback and reflects on experience; • Tests ideas, iterates and improves; open to change; learns from mistakes and is willing to build digital confidence	
Contribute	• Manages multiple tasks and priorities in a busy environment • Solves problems proactively and problem-solving and improves our ways of working • Maintains close and effective working relationships, supporting and challenging sensitively • Works collaboratively and	

	brings energy and determination to the team	
Other	Up-to-date DBS, or willingness to obtain one Safeguarding awareness for working in and with schools Data protection awareness Able to travel to partner schools	

What's it like working at nurtureuk

We are a small charity with a big impact and great benefits. We want ambitious people to join us, and we work hard to give a lot back. In the same way we ask schools to be a safe base for children and young people, we want nurtureuk to be one for the people who work here.

- **You will shape things, not just slot into them.** We are a fairly flat organisation, so from your first few weeks you will work directly with our senior team, including the CEO, with real influence over how things are done. How much you learn or take from this way of working is really up to you.
- **We want you to keep growing**. Everyone has a £500 learning budget and LinkedIn Learning is on us, to spend on getting better at what you do, or on something you've always meant to learn. We would genuinely rather help you grow than watch you stand still.
- **We want you to actually rest.** You start with 25 days off and earn more for every year you are here, up to 30 days. We think no one should have to use their own leave for Christmas or their birthday, those come free on top. We have been fully remote for years so we trust you to manage your time around your family and your life, not just work.
- **Nurture applies to us too.** We have a supportive culture inside our own team so we practice what we preach. We assume the best of each other, and we care how you are, not only what you produce.
- **Work that reaches real children.** What you do here helps schools understand and support the children who need it most. In this role, you'll be helping build a new tool that could transform support for children at a critical time in their development.
- **A role that's yours to own.** This is a brand-new role on a funded innovation project - the first of its kind at nurtureuk. There's no playbook and you'll have the chance to develop a whole new way of working for us, moving at pace.

  This role will suit someone with curiosity and collaboration in abundance. As we're a small charity, you might sometimes wear several hats and we won't have the resources of a larger organisation. If you like variety and the chance to shape things, that is a real plus. If you want lots of structure, we may not be the right place for you.

Equal opportunities

Nurtureuk is committed to being an equal opportunities employer. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and life experiences. We particularly welcome applications from trans, non-binary or gender-fluid people, and candidates from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds, who are currently under-represented in our team. If you have the right skills for this role, we want to hear from you.

How to apply

We have kept our application simple and fair. Rather than a long covering letter, please send us your CV and your answers to the questions below. We'd suggest around 250-300 words per answer.

1. **Deliver:** Tell us about a time you planned and delivered a research project at pace.
2. **Develop:** Tell us about a time you created something new, or adapted something to improve it. What did you do, and what did you learn?
3. **Contribute:** Tell us about a time you worked closely with colleagues to get moving when a project was stuck. What was your role, and how did you get things moving?
4. **Why nurtureuk:** Why us, and why this role? What makes us a good fit for you, and you for us?

We understand the value of AI tools and recognise that they can be helpful in supporting people with their writing. However, at nurtureuk, creativity and original thinking really matter to us. We want to hear your voice, ideas and experiences, and understand what you would uniquely bring to the role. This is what will make your application stand out.

Apply to luke@nurtureuk.org before Thursday 12th November at 5pm. We're looking to appoint as soon as we find someone suitable, so it could be to your advantage to apply quickly.

If you're successful at the application stage, you'll be invited to a remote interview which will be around 1 hour long.

If you need any adjustments at any stage, just email annette@nurtureuk.org