

Assessment Centre Recruitment for Social Workers in Children's Social Care.

How do we ensure that social workers have the ability to handle complex situations – before we employ them?

Traditionally local authorities have used written tests, interviews and occasionally role play to assess candidates.

Buckinghamshire County Council is the first in the country to use a computer simulation to assess candidates at the recruitment selection stage. The idea came out of our collaboration with a team of Business Psychologists, Sten10, who were working with us on reviewing our approach to recruitment, with a focus on finding the right person for the job. We believe there are significant benefits to the approach.

'Rosie 2' is an interactive child protection simulation developed by the Child Protection Team at the University of Kent. It places candidates 'in the shoes' of a social worker visiting the fictional, and complex, McGraw family. Candidates are able to interact with the characters and environment in order to form hypotheses, undertake an assessment of the family to identify the strengths and weaknesses and prepare an initial SMART plan including the involvement of multi-agency partners.

There have been concerns nationally about the standard of social workers at entry level to the profession, evidenced by the introduction of high calibre fast track 'on the job' training programmes such as Step up to Social Work and Frontline. Like many other authorities currently, we have struggled to recruit experienced social workers, who are increasingly choosing to work through agencies. As a result, the employment market is increasingly made up from newly qualified social workers with variable work and placement experience.

It can be difficult to find the high quality candidates we are looking for, those who are able to engage and build rapport with a child and their family; demonstrate sensitive and authoritative practice along with the ability to record the journey of the child in a clear and meaningful way, so that should documents be accessed in the future, the information is accurate and respectful and true. When relying on a formal interview previously, it has been clear that some candidates can describe their understanding of social work with children and families but in post they have struggled to demonstrate this for example around critical analysis, reflection and decision making. We want social workers who can reach sound, considered conclusions that show they have heard the wishes and feelings of the child and family and can incorporate that into their written work.

This is where the strengths of 'Rosie 2' are evident. The visual and audio prompts provide candidates with a developing narrative of the lives of the individuals in the family. It gives an unprecedented level of detail that can't be delivered through role playing assessments or case studies (and it cuts down on the hiring of actors or using officers' time to take part in the role plays). It is fair and consistent too – everybody who attends the recruitment assessment centre will have the same experience.

We used the process for the first time during two recruitment days in May, taking on four new social workers from the 10 candidates and are about to assess 21 more social workers.

Rosie 2 gave us a much more balanced view of their abilities and skills and also indicates areas for development, while allowing us to make more considered decisions on who we didn't want to recruit and the justification for that. It does take more time, but we believe it is worth it. The feedback has been very positive, even from candidates who have not been successful. They say they appreciate having the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a different way. It may look like a computer game, but this innovative approach has taken our recruitment of social workers to a new level.

Project: Rosie 2

Objective: To improve the recruitment process for social workers, raising standards and providing candidates with a more realistic experience to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Timescale: It took around a year from original idea to using it during recruitment days in May.

Project cost: @ £21,000 including Sten10 support covering review and development of the new recruitment process, a portfolio of motivational and competency based interview questions for social workers and managers, and Rosie 2 licences from University of Kent.

Staff working on project: A small core team of colleagues from Workforce Development, Children's Social Care and HR Resourcing

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Further information follows below.....



Social Worker Assessment

Setting the Scene - Administration Instructions

This document provides you with the information you need to set up the assessment centre and take the candidates through the first exercise – **setting the scene**.

The assessment centre consists of three core exercises which may be supplemented by other activities i.e. an interview:

- **Activity 1: Setting the Scene:** Scenes 2 – 5 of Rosie 2 gives candidates background information to help them complete exercise one
- **Activity 2: Written Exercise One:** Assessment of the visit
- **Activity 3: Setting the Scene:** Scenes 6 – 11 of Rosie 2 gives candidates background information to help them complete exercise two
- **Activity 4: Written Exercise Two:** Action Planning

Rosie 2 Scenario

The candidates are taking over from another social worker 'Andrew' who attended the last visit to the McGraw family. In reality the information they would receive would consist of call notes and conversations with relevant individuals however in this case they have the benefit of experiencing the last visit to the McGraw family through the eyes of Andrew. They will do this through a computer-based simulation called Rosie 2. This 2

simulation is often used as a training exercise but we have adapted it for the purposes of today. Because of this, they will only be asked to work through some of the scenes rather than the whole simulation.

Candidates need to notes as they watch the simulation, as they will need to refer to them later.

Timings

- Administration time: 5 minutes
- Simulation time: 30 minutes

What you need to do before the day

The assessment needs to take place in a quiet, well-lit room. For each candidate you will need to provide:

- A laptop (or computer)
- Headphones
- A print-out of the '*Candidate Overview and Instructions*'
- A print-out of the '*Background Information*' document
- Paper & pencils for them to take notes

To administer this effectively you need to be familiar with the Rosie 2 simulation. Please make sure you watch scenes 2 – 5 as they are required for written activity one and scenes 6 - 11 for written exercise two.

You may need to provide assistance to candidates, for example if they open the wrong part of the simulation and need help. You should also make sure you are available to help any candidates who are locked out of their computer.

On the Day

Please ensure that each candidate has a laptop or computer with internet access and is signed into the Rosie 2 simulation. Headphones should be set so that attendees can hear the simulation, but can still hear you when you make any announcements about moving on between activities.

You will need a stopwatch to keep track of the timing of the activity.

To set up the laptops, follow the below instructions:

1. Click on the following link:

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/sspsr/ccp/game/rosie2index.html>

2. Click '**Shortcut to Rosie 2**' underneath the picture of Rosie on the right of the screen.
3. Enter the appropriate username and password (these are provided separately).
4. Click on the exercise 'CCP Rosie 2 'Rosie 2' serious training game for Organisations'
5. Click the first hyperlink on the page: 'Rosie 2: Neglect' under the heading 'Rosie 2: the game'
6. Maximise the window so that the Rosie 2 simulation is taking the entire screen.

7. Open a blank Word document in the background and save it in the appropriate place, as attendees will be asked to write their assessment of the visit immediately after the Rosie 2 activity.
8. Place a paper copy of the 'Rosie 2 Candidate Instructions' by each laptop. Do not hand out the Candidate Instructions for the next activity until after this activity.

Introduction

As candidates arrive, guide them to a laptop. Ask them not to begin until instructed. Once all attendees have arrived make sure they are reading the 'Candidate Overview & Instructions'.

(Read verbatim the second page – Overview: Visiting the McGraw family in the '**Candidate Overview & Instructions**' document)

Say: "On your desk you should have a pack containing background information on the McGraw family."

(Take them through the contents of this document).

*Say: "Please turn back to your '**Candidate Overview & Instructions**' leaflet. I will take you through the system instructions."*

(Read verbatim the third page - System instructions in the '**Candidate Overview & Instructions**' document)

Say: "Do you have any questions?"

(Answer any questions they have.)

Say: "I will provide an indication of when you should be finishing each scene and moving on. Do not worry if you are ahead of time. I will remain in the room while you work through the simulation, so please let me know if you have any technical issues.

Your first scene will be "Scene 2: Outside the Property. For each scene, read through all the background information presented before you start it. You may now put on your headphones and begin at scene 2."

(Start timing the activity.)

You will need to make the following announcements throughout the activity to make sure attendees are making sufficient progress.

Time	Speech
0 minutes	

8 minutes	<i>If you have not already, please finish off the current scene and move on to "Scene 3: In the Garden"</i>
12 minutes	<i>If you have not already, please finish off the current scene and move on to "Scene 4: In the garden"</i>
20 minutes	<i>If you have not already, please finish off the current scene and move on to "Scene 5: Living Room"</i>
30 minutes	<i>You should be close to completing Scene 5, which is the final scene in the activity.</i>

After 30 minutes have passed, say:

"Thank you, you are now out of time. Please finish off what you are doing. You may keep any notes you made during the activity."

You should now administer **'Exercise One' Assessment of the visit.**



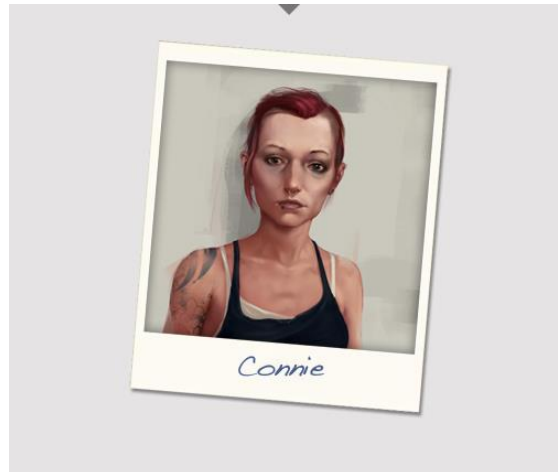
Social Worker and CSW Manager Assessment

Setting the Scene: Background Information The McGraw Family

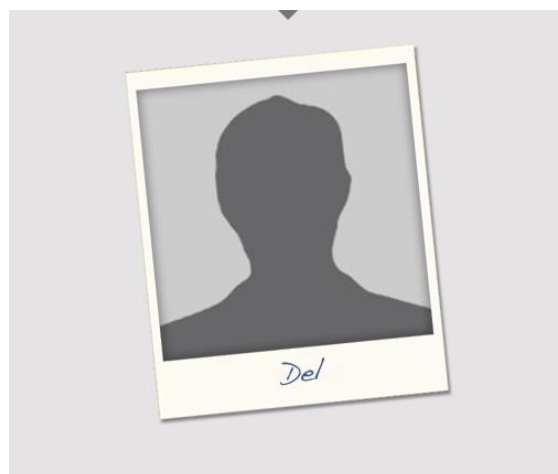


Background Information for Candidates

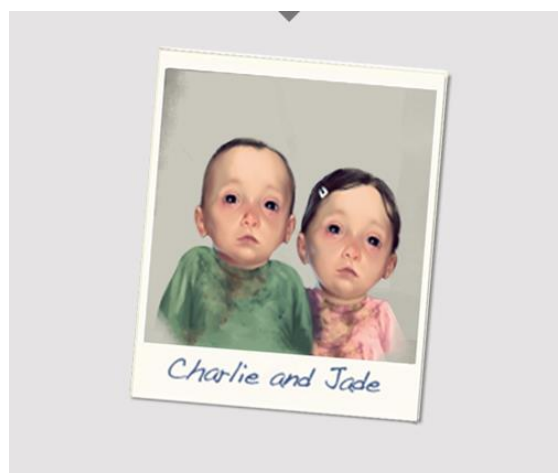
Key Characters in the McGraw family



Connie is the mother and just found out she is pregnant; she recently became engaged to Del



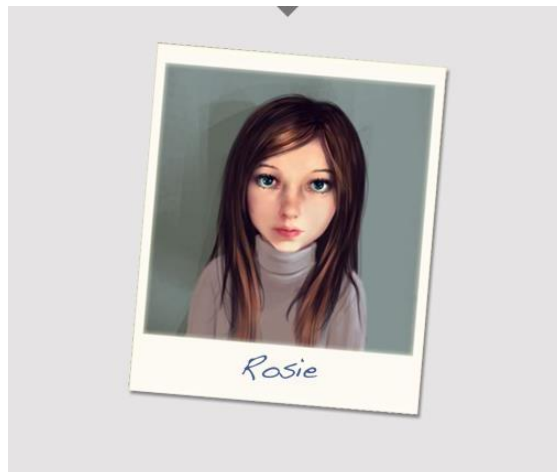
Del is the father of Connie's current baby, and step-father to the other children



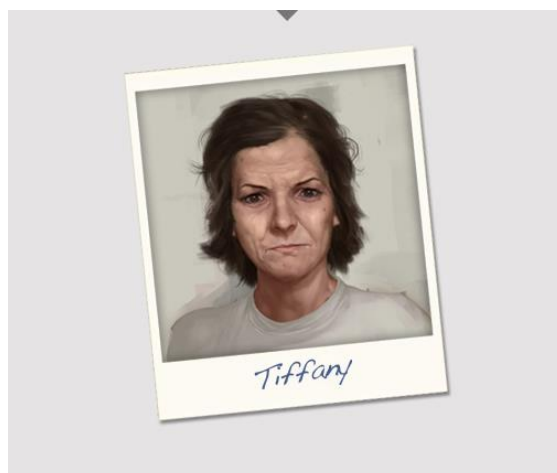
The twins



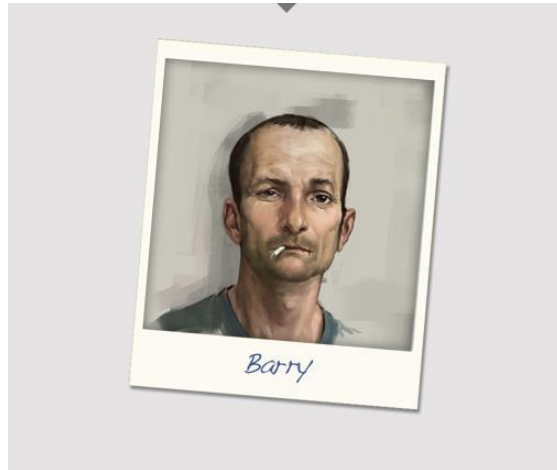
Trevor is 12 years old, and the son of Danny



Rosie has been sexually abused by her step-father Danny

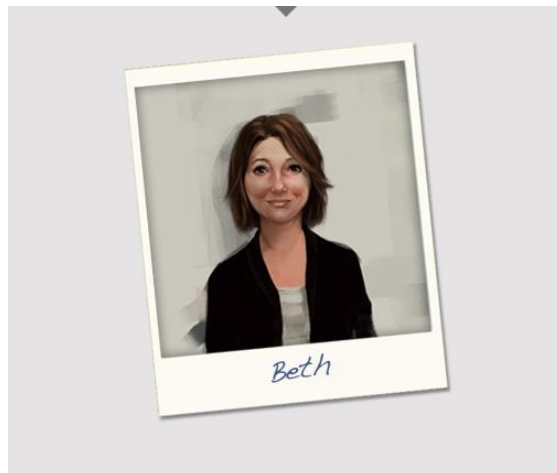


Tiffany is Connie's mum and grandmother to the children

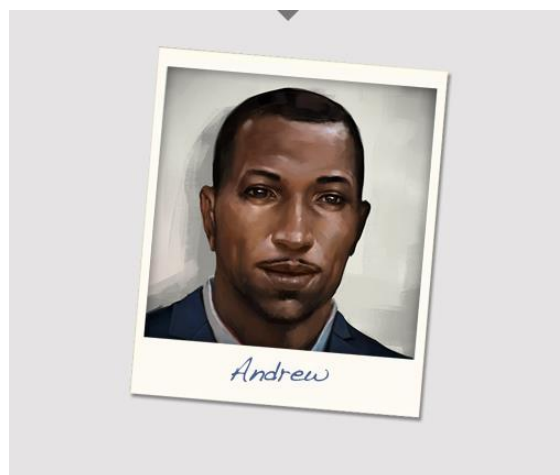


Barry is Tiffany's partner and the step-grandfather to the children

Other Characters



Beth is the health visitor



Andrew is the fourth social worker for the family

Genogram

