**MEDWAY COUNCIL - JOB PROFILE**

**POST TITLE: Lead SEND Complaints & Tribunals Officer (C0005)**

**DIRECTORATE: Children and Adults**

**DEPARTMENT: Education and SEND**

**RESPONSIBLE TO: Head of Inclusion**

**RANGE: 5**

## **MAIN PURPOSE OF JOB**

* To represent the Local Authority at the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal and defend appropriateness of the proposed service provision for an individual child/young person, and exercise decision making duties with integrity.
* To provide key leadership in case management of SEN appeal related cases to ensure that the Council discharges its responsibilities effectively in relation to statutory appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST).
* To develop practice across the SEND Assessment and Monitoring Team to reduce the Local Authority’s exposure to risk of appeals to Tribunals, complaints, litigation and judicial review/complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman.
* To work directly with parents, schools, parental appointed legal representatives and other professional bodies within the statutory and legal framework related to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal process.
* To take the lead on complex casework, providing effective mediation, drawing on strong negotiation and influencing skills across a range of complex SEN issues between parents, schools and multi-disciplinary practitioners.
* To provide support and coaching to the SEND Assessment and Monitoring Team in the resolution of complex casework, ensuring that EHCP Coordinators and EHCP Officers build strategic links with schools, education provider services and other agencies to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people and to limit the Local Authority’s exposure to risk of appeals to Tribunals.
* To be a source of expert advice to the Council and SEN officers on all aspects of the SENDIST.
* To ensure all documentation linked to SEN appeals is distributed appropriately and within specified time restraints.
* To coordinate allocation and attendance processes linked to mediation and resolution of all disputes relating to the SEND tribunal process.
* To attend resolution meetings with parents and other professionals in an attempt to settle disputed issues without the need for formal legal redress wherever possible. This will include responsibility for negotiating changes to the EHC plans using tact and diplomacy through working with families experiencing emotional turmoil.
* To ensure mediation and problem resolution is an active feature at an early stage in caseworkers’ engagement with families to reduce tribunal numbers.
* To prepare evidence and responses to complaints and enquiries including from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).
* To track and monitor responses to enquiries, complaints, tribunals and LGO decisions, assisting service managers to prepare key documentation where needed.
* To ensure team members receive regular supervision, manage performance and support team development through annual performance review of directly supervised / line-managed staff.
* To ensure that the computerised database information is accurate and up to date at all times and that action is undertaken as required to ensure production of accurate and timely information.
* To attend and contribute to Ofsted, LA, DFE and peer inspections and discussions, as required.
* To contribute to the development of multi-agency forums and groups focused on raising standards in the quality of education, inclusion, behaviour and attendance.
* To support the development of training and professional conference offers to practitioners in Medway.

## **2. ACCOUNTABILITY**

MERGE05

## **2. PERSON SPECIFICATION**

### **Qualifications**

*Essential*

* GCSE English Qualifications, including English and Maths (grade 4 or C and above).
* Professional qualifications in education or other relevant qualification.

*Desirable*

* Professional qualification in Education, Social Care or Health or transferable
* professional qualification.
* Degree level qualification.
* Evidence of further education (e.g., BTecs; NVQs or A- Levels)
* Access to own transport.

**Knowledge**

*Essential*

* In depth knowledge and understanding of current SEN legislation and reform, statutory procedures and processes governing the provision of services for children with special educational needs.
* Extensive knowledge and understanding of the impact of SEND on children and young people’s educational, health and social care outcomes.
* Thorough knowledge of the services and agencies which might be involved in EHC assessments and EHC Plan delivery.
* Extensive knowledge of the types of special needs and disabilities that effect children’s education and an ability to develop this knowledge.
* Extensive knowledge of the issues faced by children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

*Desirable*

* Knowledge of the Equality Act particularly in relation to children and young people with disabilities.
* Extensive knowledge of other related legislation, including legislation governing Adult Social Care, the Children Act, and safeguarding processes

**Experience**

*Essential*

* Previous SEND case management experience, including significant experience of managing a high case load of complex cases.
* Significant experience of Appeals and Tribunals processes and guidance.
* Significant experience of successfully managing conflict and disputes in difficult situations.
* Ability to use ICT programmes effectively to capture data and monitor performance (e.g. Microsoft office; PowerBI; Excel).
* Extensive experience of multi-agency working and working alongside a range of stakeholders to drive multi-disciplinary strategic change.

*Desirable*

* Ability to use the Synergy system.

### **Skills (Mental skills/Communication skills/Physical skills)**

*Essential*

* Ability to maintain productive relationships with a wide range stakeholders and influence decision making at a strategic level.
* Ability to model high levels of professionalism, and promote a culture of professional standards and accountability amongst the Inclusion Team.
* Ability to analyse and interpret varied and complex information, and use this information to develop strategies, anticipate challenges and identify solutions.
* Ability to use well developed communication skills to present complex/sensitive information in an understandable way, to a range of audiences.
* Demonstrable ability to work independently within clear guidelines and regularly use initiative to make decisions, referring to more senior officers for advice on policy/resource issues
* Demonstrable ability to carry out tasks which impact on the wellbeing of people, including assessing needs, implementing care/welfare, implementing regulations, providing guidance on internal procedures and interpreting policies and procedures to meet specific circumstances or problems
* Demonstrable ability to supervise, co-ordinate or train other employees where required and/or demonstrable experience of providing information and advice on internal procedures related to employees.
* Demonstrable ability to lead on the operational development of the service, using a range of information on future trends to set measurable performance objectives and inform the strategic thinking to meet future needs and not just existing practices.
* Ability to carry out accounting for considerable financial amounts accurately and with due care and attention
* Ability and willingness to travel in order to meet requirements of the role.

**Personal qualities (Mental demands)**

* Personal resilience, energy and enthusiasm.
* Strong organisational skills and ability to meet deadlines.
* A can-do, solution focused approach to working.
* Strong interpersonal and communication skills
* Commitment to equality and diversity, identifying service strategies to deliver equitable and fair services for users and employees, challenging discriminatory practices and actively managing and promoting diversity.
* Ability to build and maintain supportive and empathetic relationships, securing people’s support and commitment to a course of action or different way of thinking by presenting ideas convincingly and persuasively, and to lead major negotiations
* A commitment to, and ability to provide, a culture of continuous improvement and proven track record in the successful development and implementation of fundamental improvement/change programmes, ensuring business plans are focused and meet service requirements.

## **3. ORGANISATION**

### **ORGANISATION CHART**

### Attach a copy of the Service organisation chart - attached

### **DESCRIBE HOW AND BY WHOM THE POST IS MANAGED**

The Lead SEND Complaints & Tribunals Officer will report directly to, and be line managed by, the Central Support Service Manager

1. **DESCRIBE THE LEVEL OF INITIATIVE AND/OR INDEPENDENCE EXPECTED OF THE POST HOLDER**

The postholder will be expected to work to a high level,independently and as part of the service teams for Inclusion. The postholder will require the ability to demonstrate a high level of initiative, self-motivation, proactivity, alongside the ability to work in a demanding environment.

The postholder will demonstrate and promote a highly organised way of working, ensuring that work progresses and that projects are seen through to completion a timely way. Individuals will be motivated to identify creative and innovative ways to develop practice and overcome barriers.

### **DESCRIBE ANY SUPERVISORY/MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The post holder will line manage:

* SEND Complaints & Tribunals Officers

### **JOB CONTEXT - DESCRIBE THE MAIN CONTACTS, BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AND THE PURPOSE OF THOSE CONTACTS**

### The key contacts for this postholder may include (but are not limited to): corporate directorate teams, including senior leadership, democratic services, finance, HR; elected councillors and MPs, including lead portfolio holders in Children’s Services/Education; colleagues and senior managers across the People directorate (including Commissioning); senior leaders and other relevant representative of schools, academies and Pupil Referral Units (including Governing Bodies or equivalent); key contacts within the Department for Education and other central government departments; wider stakeholders and partners, including Integrated Care Boards (ICBs); third party providers of services (including contracted services)/education provision; and (where necessary and appropriate) members of the public/service users. The postholder would be required to develop these relationships and contacts for a number of purposes, including customer relations, and joint working across agencies.

**4. PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

It is anticipated that the majority of meetings that the post holder for this role will be required to participate in will continue to be held virtually. This will mean the post holder will spend significant amounts of time on their laptop to join these meetings/calls. However, some meetings will be held in person (in the office(s) location or external venue).

Similarly, a large amount of communication may be done via email or other electronic written communication, therefore it is recognised that this may come with an impact in terms of manual dexterity.

## **5. EMOTIONAL DEMANDS**

This postholder will be working in a fast-paced environment with a number of competing demands. The postholder will need to be agile and work to multiple priorities. This role demands a level of decision making, particularly to resolve issues and conflicts that would otherwise impede the progression of key activities and priorities.

The postholder will likely receive direct communication from members of the public, particularly if dissatisfied or upset with services and/or seeking action from the LA in respect of the relevant services

**6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE** (not staff supervision)

The job involves some direct impact on the well-being of individual, or groups of, people, through undertaking tasks or duties which are to their direct benefit, or impact directly on their health and safety.

**7.** **RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

The post holder will have some direct responsibility for financial resources. The work regularly involves either:

(a) handling of cash, or processing of cheques, invoices or equivalent or:

(b) accounting for considerable sums of money, where care and accuracy are important: or:

(c) being accountable for small expenditures from an agreed budget or equivalent income.

**8. RESPONSIBILITY FOR PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

(stock/systems/confidential information)

The postholder will be required to follow all GDPR and Information Governance policies in the handling of any data and information, including hard-copy files. Allocated hardware (laptop, etc) must also be well-maintained (with IT support available for any issues).

The postholder will be expected to have access to child-level data within case files and case management systems.

**9. WORKING CONDITIONS**

The main location of work at Medway Council, Gun Wharf. The postholder will be required to also work various Family Hub located in Medway The post involves frequent visits to a wide range of community settings, including schools and education provision settings will be required as part of these roles. From time to time, the post holders may be expected to attend internal and external networking events (e.g. team meetings and events, headteacher conferences), held at external venues. It is anticipated that the majority of meetings, particularly with external partners, would likely continue to be held virtually. The postholder may be required to undertake home visits.