

Northumberland County Council

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

<b>Post Title:</b> SEND Tribunal Officer	<b>Director/Service/Sector:</b> Education and Skills Service, Wellbeing and Community Health Services		<b>Office Use</b>
<b>Band:</b> 9	<b>Workplace:</b> County Hall		JE Ref: 3567
<b>Responsible to:</b> SEND Team Manager	<b>Date:</b> April 2019	<b>Job Family:</b> Education	
<p><b>Job Purpose:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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), which is part of her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS).</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• To provide support and deputies for the SEND Assessment and Monitoring Team Manager when required, to ensure the efficient and effective administration of EHC casework associated with the SEND Assessment and Monitoring Team.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>			
<b>Resources</b>	Staff	The post holder will support and deputise for the SEND Assessment and Monitoring Team Manager in managing the SEND Assessment and Monitoring Team and will line manage including appraisal, support and supervision of staff of coordinators and officers in the team for a locality.	
	Finance	The post holder will not be responsible for a budget	
	Physical	The post holder will be based at County Hall but will attend meetings at schools and colleges across the county as well as Courts of Law and tribunals externally.	
	Clients	Children and young people whose SEND fall within the statutory framework, parents, schools and partner agencies involved with children and young people concerned.	
<b>Duties and key result areas:</b>			

1. To arrange and chair pre-tribunal conferences with witnesses and perform other duties in relation to First Tier Tribunals and Appeals.
2. Prepare legal cases for tribunal, liaising with Legal Services, EHCP Coordinators and EHCP Officers, witnesses and to represent the Local Authority in a legal environment.
3. Attend court as the legal representative for Northumberland County Council and present case.
4. Ensure all documentation linked to SEN appeals is distributed appropriately and within specified time restraints.
5. Present the Local Authority's cases at the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal and defend appropriateness of the proposed service provision for an individual child/young person.
6. Coordinate allocation and attendance processes linked to mediation and resolution of all disputes relating to the SEND tribunal process.
7. Arrange and decide representation from the Assessment and Planning Team at meetings with parents, schools and other providers as appropriate, including statutory meetings, chairing as required.
8. 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.
9. Work closely with internal and external stakeholders, including parents, legal services, schools and colleges to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people and to limit the Local Authority's exposure to risk of appeals to Tribunals.
10. Ensure mediation and problem resolution is an active feature at an early stage in caseworkers' engagement with families to reduce tribunal numbers.
11. Provide support to the team to resolve complex issues on their caseloads.
12. To support the SEND Assessment and Monitoring Team Manager in maintaining an overview of the work of the team responding to queries on the procedural implementation of the SEND Code of Practice, identifying opportunities for service improvement and sharing these with the SEND Senior Management.
13. To prepare evidence and responses to complaints and enquiries including from the Local Government Ombudsman.
14. Coordinate and collate information to support the Local Authority where there is dispute about special educational needs support arrangements.
15. Offer coaching and training to team members to ensure consistency of approach, sharing and promoting best practice through the dissemination of statutory guidance and the learning from case studies.
16. Provide support and advice to EHCP Coordinators and Officers, as required, to ensure the efficient and effective administration of statutory casework in relation to the completion of Education Health and Care plans in line with the SEN Code of Practice and Children and Families Act 2014.
17. Ensure team members receive regular supervision, manage performance and support team development through annual performance review of directly supervised / line-managed staff.
18. Take responsibility for ensuring 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.

19. Use management information and data to develop a framework and policies to help improve efficiency and effectiveness of the service and to ensure consistency of decision making through EHC assessments, plans and annual reviews.

The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and extent of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.

**Work Arrangements**

Transport requirements:

The work involves the need to visit schools or work sites throughout the County or regionally on a regular and routine basis.

Working patterns:

Other than travel between sites, the work is office-based.

Working conditions:

Northumberland County Council  
**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

<b>Post Title:</b> SEND Tribunal Officer	<b>Director/Service/Sector:</b> Education and Skills Service, Wellbeing and Community Health Services	Ref: 3567
<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>	
<b>Knowledge and Qualifications</b>		
<p>Professional qualification in Education, Social Care or Health or transferable professional qualification</p> <p>Minimum degree level qualification.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Extensive knowledge and understanding of the impact of SEND on children and young people's educational, health and social care outcomes.</p> <p>Extensive knowledge of other related legislation, including legislation governing Adult Social Care, the Children Act and safeguarding processes</p> <p>Knowledge of the Equality Act particularly in relation to children and young people with disabilities</p> <p>Understanding of and commitment to person centred approaches, personalisation and key working functions</p> <p>Thorough knowledge of the services and agencies which might be involved in EHC assessments and EHC Plan delivery.</p>	<p>Knowledge of other related legislation, including legislation governing Adult Social Care, the Children Act and safeguarding processes.</p> <p>Knowledge of Local Authority complaints procedures.</p>	
<b>Experience</b>		
<p>Minimum of 2 years' experience of working within a Local Authority Statutory Assessment Team.</p> <p>Extensive experience of working with parents and families</p> <p>Extensive experience of multi agency working</p>	<p>Knowledge and experience of legal or tribunal processes.</p>	
<b>Skills and competencies</b>		
<p>Excellent written communication skills including ability to draft clear and detailed tribunal responses.</p>	<p>Ability to use SEN Module of Capita One system and RAISE system.</p>	

High level oral communication skills including the ability to communicate effectively in a variety of situations, face-to-face, telephone or large group.

Ability to identify the key evidence to support the SEND appeals process.

The ability to meet tribunal deadlines.

Negotiation skills: ability to manage oral and written negotiations sensitively, appropriately and successfully.

Interpersonal skills: the skills to relate effectively to parents, professionals and colleagues

Ability to demonstrate sensitivity and objectivity in dealing with emotive and confidential issues

Mediation skills

Knowledge and experience of working with Windows software; MS Excel, MS Word.

Experience of using a computerised database to support service delivery.

Experience of communicating with children and their families and professionals concerning complex issues.

Proven track record of complex case management in a multi-disciplinary environment.

Experience of using a computerised database to support service delivery.

Tact and diplomacy; the ability to deal with sensitive and confidential issues that require a variety of approaches.

Ability to remain effective and professional in challenging and difficult situations.

Ability to establish good working relationships

Analytical thinking and ability to make sound judgements based on appropriate evidence.

Ability to supervise a team of staff and take responsibility for the overall quality of the work of individual team members.

Ability to performance manage to ensure EHCP Coordinators and Officers are supported in carrying out their role.

Ability to work independently and on own initiative, requiring minimal supervision.

Well organised and methodical

Ability to work in a pressurised environment

High level of personal resilience

Commitment to promoting and implementing equal opportunities.

Commitment to customer care practices.

Commitment to person centred approaches, personalisation and key working functions

**Physical, mental and emotional demands**

The post holder will need to work under pressure, managing conflicting priorities within tight timescales and speedily making decisions on complex and challenging cases. This area of work can be emotionally draining and the post holder will need resilience to deliver justifiable decisions to parents, schools and colleagues which may not meet their expectations.

**Other**