# EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL JOB DESCRIPTION

# JOB TITLE: SEN Tribunals Officer ISEND Assessment and Planning

# DEPARTMENT: Children’s Services

# LOCATION: Lewes

# GRADE: [East Sussex Single Status 11](https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/jobs/benefits/east-sussex-single-status)

# RESPONSIBLE TO: Principal Educational Psychologist, ISEND

# Purpose of the Role:

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.

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).

To develop practice across the Assessment and Planning team, this limits the Authority’s exposure to risk of appeals to Tribunals and 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 provide operational management of a team of Assessment and Planning Officers, when required, to ensure the efficient and effective administration of EHC casework associated with the integrated Assessment and Planning Team.

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 casework team in the resolution of complex casework, ensuring that Assessment and Planning 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.

# Key tasks:

1. Support colleagues to prepare chronologies and any other necessary paperwork, arrange and chair conferences with witnesses and perform other duties in relation to First Tier Tribunals and Appeals.
2. Prepare cases for tribunal, liaising with Legal Services, Assessment & Planning Managers / Team Leaders and Assessment and Planning Officers, and represent the Local Authority in a legal environment. Prepare evidence for Local Government Ombudsman.
3. Coordinate and collate information to support the Local Authority where there is dispute about special educational needs support arrangements.
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.
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. Engage with schools and other agencies to develop an awareness and understanding of the issues in relation to assessment and planning and person centred approaches.
12. Provide support to the team to resolve complex issues on their caseloads.
13. Maintain a clear supervisory oversight 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 Assessment and Planning Managers and Principal EP.
14. 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.
15. Supervise/manage a team of Assessment and Planning 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.
16. Ensure team members receive regular supervision, manage performance and support team development through annual performance review of directly supervised / line-managed staff.
17. 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.
18. 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.
19. Contribute to the wider ISEND service aspirations, identifying opportunities to achieve integrated working on a multi-agency basis. Work as an effective team member within the Assessment and Planning team and the wider ISEND team.

# EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL PERSON SPECIFICATION

# Essential key skills and abilities

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| These criteria will be assessed at the application and interview stage |
| * Ability to draft and prepare correspondence and reports which are accurate in terms of content, grammar and spelling. * Ability to analyse and interpret detailed and complex information and to use such information to benefit work objectives. * Ability to quickly assimilate information and make informed decisions under short time constraints. * Proven ability to communicate effectively in both written and oral form with a variety of audiences to ensure that key issues are identified and understood. * Proven negotiation skills that achieve desired outcomes. * Ability to work with minimum supervision, balancing using own initiative against need to seek management guidance. * Proven ability to work collaboratively as an effective wider team member to achieve service aspirations. * Ability to acquire and apply new knowledge to ensure that work/advice is consistent and reliable. * Proven ability to anticipate problems and achieve workable solutions to complex problems and to ensure contingencies are planned for. * Ability to identify work priorities and manage team workload to meet deadlines, ensuring objectives and targets are achieved with minimal disruption. * 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 Assessment and Planning Officers are supported in carrying out their role. * Ability to demonstrate sensitivity and objectivity in dealing with emotive and confidential issues. |

# Essential education and qualifications.

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| These criteria will be evidenced via certificates, or at interview |
| * Level 5 qualification in a relevant field or equivalent experience. |

# Desirable education and qualifications.

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| These criteria will be evidenced via certificates, or at interview |
| * Level 6 qualification. * Evidence of recent professional development. |

# Essential knowledge

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| These criteria will be assessed at the application and interview stage |
| * 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. * Knowledge and understanding of the impact of SEND on children and young people’s educational outcomes. * Knowledge and experience of working with Windows software; MS Excel, MS Word. * Proven track record of complex case management in a multi-disciplinary environment. |

# Desirable knowledge

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| These criteria will be assessed at the application and interview stage |
| * Knowledge and experience of legal or tribunal processes. |

# Essential experience

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| These criteria will be assessed at the application and interview stage |
| * Experience of using a computerised database to support service delivery. * Experience of communicating with children and their families concerning complex issues. |

# Desirable experience

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| These criteria will be assessed at the application and interview stage |
| * Experience of working in a Local Authority. * Experience of working in an educational environment. * Experience of working in a legal environment. |

# Other essential criteria

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| These criteria will be assessed at the application and interview stage |
| * Ability to support and challenge team members as required. * Ability to demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to adapt to change. * Ability to work calmly and effectively under pressure. * Reliability, honesty and a commitment to maintaining confidentiality. * A commitment to equalities in service delivery and employment and evidence of successful implementation of equalities in practice. * Ability to work flexible hours to meet to needs of the service. * Full driving license or the ability to demonstrate how you will meet the travelling needs of the role. |

**Date (drawn up): October 2021**

**Name of Officer(s) drawing up person specifications:**

**Job Evaluation Reference: 9671**

Health & Safety Functions

This section is to make you aware of any health & safety related functions you may be expected to either perform or to which may be exposed in relation to the post you are applying for. This information will help you if successful in your application identify any health-related condition which may impact on your ability to perform the job role, enabling us to support you in your employment by way of reasonable adjustments or workplace support.

| **Function** | **Applicable to role** |
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| Using display screen equipment | Yes/No |
| Working with children/vulnerable adults | Yes/No |
| Moving & handling operations | Yes/No |
| Occupational Driving | Yes/No |
| Lone Working | Yes/No |
| Working at height | Yes/No |
| Shift / night work | Yes/No |
| Working with hazardous substances | Yes/No |
| Using power tools | Yes/No |
| Exposure to noise and /or vibration | Yes/No |
| Food handling | Yes/No |
| Exposure to blood /body fluids | Yes/No |