

Kent County Council

Job Description: *Assistant Director SEN Strategy & Quality Assurance*

Directorate:	Children, Young People & Education (CYPE)
Unit/Section:	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
Grade:	KSM
Responsible to:	Director – Education and Special Education Needs

Purpose of the Job:

The Assistant Director for SEN Strategy and Quality will provide high-level leadership and strategic oversight for Kent County Council's SEN services, ensuring the Council meets its statutory duties while driving long-term improvements. This role will set the strategic vision for SEN, ensuring that the service delivers high-quality provision, strengthens partnerships, and achieves positive outcomes for children and young people (aged 0-25) with special educational needs and disabilities. The post holder will lead on working effectively with other services across Children's Services and beyond, maximising opportunities for systemwide collaboration.

The postholder will be accountable for embedding a culture of excellence, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring that SEN services align with local, regional, and national priorities including working effectively with DfE and NHS England. They will lead on system-wide transformation, driving efficiency and financial sustainability enhancing communications and engagement strategies, ensuring robust quality assurance frameworks, and strengthening the Council's approach to safeguarding and workforce development.

Main duties and responsibilities:

Accountabilities
<p>Strategic Leadership and System-Wide Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and manage implementation of a long-term SEND strategy, ensuring a clear vision for service delivery that provides evidence of improving outcomes for children and young people.• Provide leadership on SEN transformation, ensuring that Kent remains at the forefront of best practice, innovation, and national policy developments.• Lead and drive a culture change programme within SEN services, embedding KCC values through an approach that promotes inclusion, accountability, and excellence.• Ensure the development of a skilled and motivated workforce through a strategic approach to training, professional development, and performance management in collaboration with KCC HR.• Act as the senior strategic lead for SEND inspections, ensuring full preparedness for Ofsted and CQC reviews and overseeing improvement plans.• Ensure SEN services are data-driven and outcomes-focused, embedding performance management systems that provide insight into service effectiveness and impact.

Communications, Engagement, and Influence:

- Create and embed Kent's SEN communications and engagement strategy into the SEN service, ensuring clear, accessible, and transparent communication with families, schools, and professional partners.
- Build trust and confidence in Kent's SEN system, ensuring that parents, carers, and young people have meaningful opportunities for co-production and participation in decision-making.
- Ensure that SEN services lead communication opportunities with the media, local communities, and advocacy groups, addressing concerns, celebrating successes, and reinforcing Kent's commitment to continuous improvement.
- Work closely with Cabinet and senior leadership to ensure SEND remains a corporate priority, providing briefings and strategic reports.
- Act as a spokesperson for SEN services, representing the Council at regional and national forums to influence policy and funding decisions.

Quality Assurance, Safeguarding, and Compliance:

- Establish and lead an externally validated, comprehensive quality assurance framework, ensuring that all services operate at the highest standard and comply with statutory requirements.
- Ensure the quality of provision in independent, out-of-county, and specialist settings, ensuring compliance with safeguarding regulations and contractual agreements.
- Ensure that all commissioned and in-house SEN services meet rigorous safeguarding standards, embedding a culture of safety and protection for vulnerable children and young people.
- Lead on the strategic oversight and effective multi-agency delivery of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs), ensuring quality and consistency across decision-making processes and the outcomes.
- Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for all SEN providers, ensuring service contracts deliver value for money and positive outcomes.
- Leading the identification of and implementation of lessons learned from complaints, tribunals, and safeguarding incidents, ensuring continuous improvement in service delivery and decision-making.
- Ensuring full preparedness for Ofsted/CQC SEN inspections, leading the strategic response to inspection feedback and driving improvements.

Culture Change and Workforce Development:

- Lead a transformational culture change programme across SEN services, embedding a culture of high expectations, inclusion, and accountability.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive training and development strategy for SEN staff, ensuring consistent application of best practices and legal frameworks.
- Create and maintain a culture where staff feel empowered to take initiative, engage in continuous learning, and deliver high-quality outcomes for children and young people.
- Ensure that staff understand and are equipped to implement the SEND Code of

Practice and broader statutory frameworks.

- Develop leadership capacity across SEN services, ensuring strong succession planning and a resilient workforce.

Partnership Development and Multi-Agency Coordination:

- Lead county-wide collaboration between education, health, and social care partners, ensuring integrated and joined up SEN services.
- Work closely with NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), local health providers, and social care teams to develop multi-agency pathways and joint commissioning arrangements.
- Strengthen cross-sector collaboration with independent, voluntary, and private sector partners, ensuring a diverse and high-quality SEN support system.

Corporate Responsibilities

All corporate directors, directors and senior managers have an explicit responsibility to deliver the collective agenda of the Council. These are fundamental elements of their role not an addition and are summarised as follows:

Whole Council

- Seek to improve the lives of all residents in Kent and economy of Kent.
- Act as corporate parent to the Council's looked after children.
- Take an active role in promoting and ensuring the Council's responsibilities for safeguarding are met.
- Understand, communicate, and contribute to the delivery of KCC's strategic aims.
- Meet statutory obligations and promote and ensure compliance with policies and procedures and the Council's Code of Conduct (Kent Code).
- Advise elected members and support the democratic process.
- Promote the Council brand and enhance the overall reputation of the Council.
- Understand and monitor the measures of performance, including customer insight, which define successful outcomes for KCC services.
- Maintain and ensure a relentless focus on the customer.
- Act to support the Council-wide need to deliver services within budget, thereby avoiding an overspend that could damage the financial viability of the Council.
- Overcome professional and service silos to achieve the County Council's objectives.

Integration of Services

- Focus resources where they have the biggest impact.
- Deliver services that are flexible and adaptable.
- Integrate services within KCC and work with partner agencies to ensure a seamless

customer experience.

- Fully and inclusively engage all staff in the delivery of services, demonstrating the Council's leadership values and competencies.

Embedding Commissioning and Engaging relevant markets

- Establish an outcome focused organisation.
- Meet the financial regulations and standing orders of KCC.
- Challenge the status quo and engage with the market to constantly improve.
- Ensure all services are delivered effectively and efficiently.

- Proactively and continuously seek to improve service delivery.

- Proactively manage risk to avoid inertia whilst not exposing the Council to needless and avoidable challenge or loss.

Managing Change

- Understand and support the Authority's overall change agenda.
- Deliver required outcomes of service specific change on time and to budget.
- Understand the quality of staff, support their development, nurture those with talent.
- Identify the skills for the future and the level of staff through robust workforce planning.
- Identify and deal with underperformance.
- Deliver to agreed budget and income targets.

Footnote: This job description is provided to assist the job holder to know what their main duties are. It may be amended from time to time without change to the level of responsibility appropriate to the grade of post.

Kent County Council

Person Specification: *Assistant Director SEN Strategy & Quality Assurance*

The following outlines the criteria for this post. Applicants who have a disability and who meet the criteria will be shortlisted.

Applicants should describe in their application how they meet these criteria.

	CRITERIA
QUALIFICATIONS	<p>Post-graduate qualification in a special educational needs related discipline.</p> <p>And</p> <p>Experience of leading and managing specialist services for children with SEND, including educational psychology services and specialist teaching services.</p>
EXPERIENCE	<p>Broad experience of multi-agency working at a senior level, coupled with a positive approach to networking and cooperative working with other departments, services and agencies.</p> <p>Proven experience of working with schools to develop and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>Significant Local Authority strategic management experience and evidence of the ability to determine, direct and translate strategic planning into operational reality.</p> <p>Experience of Business Planning. This will include the analysis of client and customer needs, setting of objectives, managing a complex budget and the effective evaluation of outcomes.</p> <p>Experience of leading change in the model of delivery of specialist services developing, implementing, and advising on strategy and policy with a focus on applying evidence-informed practice, effective decision-making and parental confidence. outcomes.</p> <p>Experience of leading teams of staff including professional psychologists</p>
SKILLS AND ABILITIES	<p>Well-developed self-motivation skills with the ability to work with a limited degree of direct supervision to challenging deadlines.</p> <p>Ability to communicate effectively at all levels and through all media with a wide range of professionals, using high level negotiation, influencing and interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Excellent interpersonal, analytical and presentation skills and the ability to represent the Directorate to Members and work with political sensitivity.</p> <p>Good at building relationships with stakeholders.</p> <p>Effective at team working; able to step into support colleagues</p>

	and draw on the skills and expertise within the wider team to ensure that the Local Authorities priorities and programme of whole system change for children with SEND is kept on track.
KNOWLEDGE	<p>Knowledge of management theory and systems and evidence of application.</p> <p>Understanding of, and positive commitment to, inclusive education and equal opportunities for all.</p> <p>Good understanding of Children and Families Act 2024 legislation and knowledge and understanding of the current context for education.</p>
KENT VALUES AND CULTURAL ATTRIBUTES	
	<p>Kent Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are brave. We do the right thing; we accept and offer challenge. • We are curious to innovate and improve. • We are compassionate, understanding, and respectful to all. • We are strong together by sharing knowledge. • We are all responsible for the difference we make. <p>Our values enable us to build a culture that is:</p> <p>Flexible/agile - willing to take (calculated) risks and want people that are flexible and agile.</p> <p>Curious - constantly learning and evolving.</p> <p>Compassionate and Inclusive - compassionate, understanding, and respectful to all</p> <p>Working Together - building and delivering for the best interests of Kent</p> <p>Empowering - Our people take accountability for their decisions and actions.</p> <p>Externally Focused - Residents, families, and communities at the heart of decision making.</p>