

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

Purpose of the Job:

The Assistant Director for Statutory SEN will provide high-level leadership and oversight of Kent County Council's statutory SEN services, ensuring the efficient and effective of Assessments and the delivery of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plans, school placements, and specialist provision. The postholder will be responsible for ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks while continuously improving service delivery and the experience of children, young people, and families within the agreed budget whilst taking account of parent and pupil voice. The post holder will lead on working effectively with other services across Children's Services and beyond, maximising opportunities for systemwide collaboration.

This role will lead SEN statutory services across the county, ensuring robust case management, high-quality decision-making, and a responsive, customer-focused approach driving efficiency and financial sustainability. The postholder will also play a key role in resolving complex complaints, tribunals, and dispute resolution, ensuring fair, legally sound, and transparent decision-making and feeding the learning into the continuous improvement process. The post holder will work with DfE and NHS England to influence national developments.

Main duties and responsibilities:

Accountabilities
Leadership and Strategic Oversight of SEN Statutory Services <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide strategic leadership and direction for the delivery of SEN services across Kent, ensuring they are responsive, efficient, and compliant with statutory requirements and delivered within the agreed resource.• Lead the SEN service, ensuring the timely and effective completion of Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) and placements, Annual Reviews and Tribunal delivery in line with strategic vision. Set service wide expectations around decision making for complex casework, representing the service where required.• Lead on embedding a high-performance culture across operational teams, ensuring that casework and decision-making are consistent and of high quality and legally robust.• Drive continuous service improvement initiatives, focusing on efficiency, digital transformation, and customer experience.• Work closely with Cabinet and senior leadership to ensure SEN 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.

Dispute Resolution

- Develop and oversee systems for the management and resolution of complex complaints within SEN, ensuring clear, timely, and legally sound responses in line with Kent County Council's customer service standards.
- Lead on SEND Tribunal processes, ensuring the Council's position is effectively represented and that decisions are informed by strong evidence and sound legal arguments, challenging problematic outcomes.
- Manage formal dispute resolution processes, including mediation and joint problem-solving with families, schools, and partner agencies.
- Ensure effective parent and carer engagement, developing proactive strategies to reduce disputes and enhance communication.

Service Performance, Quality Assurance, and Compliance

- Ensure SEN operational services comply with statutory responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice.
- Implement robust quality assurance frameworks, ensuring EHCPs, placement decisions, and service provision are consistently high quality and lead to positive outcomes for children and young people.
- Lead on data analysis and performance monitoring, ensuring service decisions are evidence-based and that key performance indicators (KPIs) are met.
- Ensure full preparedness for Ofsted/CQC SEND inspections, leading the operational response to inspections and ensuring action plans drive measurable improvements.
- Work closely with Cabinet, elected Members and the directorate and partners to ensure SEN remains a corporate priority, providing high-level briefings and strategic reports

Financial and Resource Management

- Manage the operational budget for SEN services, ensuring effective financial control while delivering high-quality provision.
- Ensure that placement decisions are cost-effective and align with SEN sufficiency planning, working closely with commissioning and finance teams.
- Identify and drive efficiency savings within SEN operational teams, ensuring resources are used effectively and in line with Kent's financial strategy.

Partnership Working and Multi-Agency Coordination

- Develop and maintain systemwide collaboration with schools, early years settings,

colleges, and post-16 providers, ensuring that Kent's SEN support system is well-coordinated and responsive to need.

- Work closely with Health and Social Care partners to ensure multi-agency working delivers coordinated, child-centred support.
- Lead on specialist provision coordination, ensuring children and young people can access suitable education placements in a cost-effective and sustainable way.
- Represent the Local Authority in multi-agency forums, ensuring that Kent's SEN services are well-connected and aligned with regional and national policy developments.

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 Statutory Services*

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 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 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.</p>
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>