

Head of Commissioning - SEND

Job Description

Position Pay Level: SML12

Position Pay SCP: SML121

Salary: £84,461 - £93,712, inclusive of Local Weighting Allowance of £1,130 per annum

DBS requirement: Enhanced

Reports to: Strategic Lead, SEND Sufficiency, Commissioning and Governance

Responsible for: SEND Commissioning

Number of reports: 1 report

Financial Responsibilities: £31m HNB budget

Main purpose of Job:

To provide strategic leadership for the commissioning, sufficiency planning and market management of education, health and care provision for children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The post-holder will lead the development and delivery of a sustainable SEND commissioning strategy, ensuring that high-quality provision is available locally, delivers positive outcomes for children and young people, achieves value for money, and fulfils the local authority's statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice.

Main Accountabilities:

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the implementation of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy and Service Commissioning Strategy and their annual updates
- Provide strategic oversight of special and mainstream specialist placements, alternative provision, specialist units, post-16 provision and SEND commissioned services.
- Develop commissioning plans that respond to current and future demand.
- Ensure commissioning activity aligns with the local Inclusion Strategy.
- Lead on the Post Inspection Action Plan for commissioning

Commissioning and Market Development

- Lead all aspects of the SEND sufficiency and services commissioning cycles, including needs analysis, market engagement, procurement, contract management and evaluation.

- Develop constructive relationships with maintained, academy, independent, non-maintained providers, health, education and social care providers
- Shape the SEND market to increase local provision and reduce out-of-area placements.
- Identify opportunities for jointly commissioned services with Health and Adult Social Care.
- Ensure commissioned services are outcome-focused and represent value for money
- Sufficiency Planning
- Lead forecasting of future SEND demand using demographic, placement and EHCP data.
- Ensure sufficient specialist and mainstream SEND capacity across the local area.
- Ensure commissioned services remain fit for purpose
- Reduce reliance on independent and non-maintained specialist placements where appropriate.
- Support the development of specialist resource provisions, units and post-16 pathways.
- Ensure commissioned services are part of an integrated schools led service delivery model around clusters of schools

Financial Management

- Manage substantial High Needs Block budgets for specialist provision and commissioned services.
- Monitor placement costs, identifying opportunities for savings and reinvestment.
- Deliver agreed budget efficiencies while maintaining quality and outcomes.
- Provide financial reports and forecasts to senior leaders and elected members.

Partnership Working

- Work strategically with Education, Health, Social Care and Integrated Care Boards.
- Lead engagement with parents, carers and young people through co-production.
- Represent the council at regional and national SEND forums.
- Lead the SEND post inspection plan and improvement activity for commissioning.

Governance and Quality Assurance

- Lead strategic SEND sufficiency and commissioning boards.
- Maintain the sufficiency and commissioning governance frameworks.
- Ensure robust contract monitoring and provider quality assurance.
- Monitor and provide six monthly governance reports for performance, outcomes and compliance with statutory duties.

Key Areas for Development

1. Reducing reliance on independent and non-maintained placements.
2. Developing local specialist provision.
3. Strengthening preparation for adulthood and post-16 pathways.
4. Delivering High Needs Block sustainability.
5. Using data to forecast future SEND demand and capacity requirements.
6. Leading joint commissioning with health and adult social care.

Person Specification:

Head of Commissioning – SEND

Area	Description	Essential/ Desirable
Experience	Substantial senior leadership experience in SEND, education commissioning, inclusion or children's services.	E
	Proven experience of managing High Needs Block budgets.	E
	Proven experience of SEND sufficiency planning and market development.	E
	Proven experience of commissioning services and managing contracts.	E
	Proven experience of partnership working across education, health and social care.	E
	Proven experience of leading strategic change and service transformation.	E
Skills and abilities	Ability to develop and deliver effective strategic plans.	E
	Strong financial and commercial judgement.	E
	Ability to analyse data and produce robust forecasts.	E
	Highly effective negotiation and influencing skills.	E
	Ability to lead and sustain effective partnerships.	E
	Excellent report-writing and presentation skills for senior boards.	E
Knowledge and understanding	Comprehensive knowledge of the Children and Families Act 2014.	E
	Comprehensive knowledge of the SEND Code of Practice.	E
	Strong understanding of High Needs funding arrangements.	E
	Strong understanding of school place planning and sufficiency.	E
	Strong understanding of integrated SEND service delivery.	E
	Strong knowledge of public-sector commissioning and procurement.	E
	Detailed knowledge of the Ofsted/CQC area SEND inspection framework.	E
Qualifications		