

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

CHILDREN, SCHOOL'S and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: Senior SEND Commissioning Consultant

Grade: MGB

Division/Section: Education & Early Help

Location: Blended

Responsible to: Assistant Director – Education & Early Help

Responsible for: To provide specialist commissioning advice to the Departmental Management Team and the wider council to deliver the commissioning and contract management tasks as set out in the DfE safety valve programme.

Post number:

Date: 12th January 2022

Overall Purpose of the Job

To lead on the following:

- reduce the numbers of pupils currently attending independent and non-maintained provision;
- support the strategy to develop more places and sustain them so that Merton children and young people can attend local state-funded (academy and maintained) provision;
- identify (in an ongoing manner) those areas of need, or characteristics of pupil profiles, so that the growth and expansion of local Merton provision is properly aligned with pupil and student needs;
- reduce the costs of specialist placements;
- improve the efficiency and impact of local Merton placements through the development of a framework whereby value for money can be assessed for EY settings, maintained schools and academies; and
- reduce High Needs Budget spend on independent and non-maintained settings which is currently £23 million per year, in line with Safety Valve programme targets.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- In relation to the non-maintained and independent (non-state-funded) the post holder will focus on taking control of spend as follows:

The Quality of Contract Management and value for money

Ensuring that contractual arrangements are developed and in place for the Monitoring of all Independent, Non-Maintained Special Schools and Colleges. The focus will be on:

- i. ensuring contractual compliance both on a provider level and an individual learner level;
- ii. using this information and process to enable detailed oversight of providers in terms of their:
 - performance;
 - pupil/student level outcomes – individually and aggregate for LBM pupils/students at the setting;
 - individual pupil/student attendance and LBM school cohort aggregate attendance; and
 - overall value for money for agreed placements.

Risks of overpayment/dual payments to Providers

The focus will be on:

- iii. establishing a formal protocol whereby any variation to placement spend is considered by the SEND Commissioning lead and the Head of SENDs;
- iv. reducing idiosyncratic and one-off spend;
- v. putting rigour and management controls or processes in place that will help:
 - to improve decision making;
 - to bring professionals together to ensure all options have been properly explored;
 - to identify under-utilised resources; and
 - to identify any unauthorised or idiosyncratic spend.

Phase 1 – Diagnostic

- Identify and examine incumbent contractual arrangements and current finance list of all active placements.
- Examine end-to-end process from placement brokerage to review of placements.
- Establish baseline statistics.
- Seek an up-to-date provider contact list and arrange urgent contract meetings focusing on a deep dive review of each placement and gathering market intelligence.

Phase 2 – Data Triangulation

- Triangulation of provider data from contract meetings, finance data and SEND Casework data.

- Identify opportunity areas for efficiencies and undertake further forensic analysis into specific cases.
- Undertake thematic analysis and identify strategic recommendations for practice, Commissioning and Finance.

Phase 3 – Implementation

- Develop if required a process map that allows transparency of costs as well as easy monitoring and tracking of placements.
- Develop an annual contract compliance cycle to be embedded into business as usual.

Staff Management

- The Senior SEND commissioning consultant will assist and support the Head of SENDIS and the AD – Education & Early Help to keep children & young people in local state funded provision and, reduce spend on out of area placements and improve efficiency of local placements whilst at the same time reducing pressures on the High Needs Block.
- The Senior SEND commissioning consultant will shape the development of a new commissioning approach and will coach and train staff in any new processes or service delivery offer (up to 5 people.)

Other duties

- To develop financial information systems to align accurate budget splits and understand cost breakdown on Health, Social Care and SEND.
- To identify and resolve issues with the current processes and improve contract monitoring functions around issuance of contracts and schedule 2 Individual Placement Agreements.
- To put in place a system that will be used to deal with any fee increases put forward.
- To develop a performance schedule that enables VFM judgements to be reached and to identify any missing data from the data sets recommended for this purpose.
- Advice on the impact of policy and practice for people in more excluded groups and communities.
- Actively encourage service staff to gain user feedback on the quality of services delivered and use the information gathered to develop the quality of the service user experience.
- Effective on-going communication to all stakeholders including politicians and partner agencies.
- Ensure that personal and professional development opportunities are taken and achieved, where appropriate, in line with performance objectives, mandatory training, career pathways and individual opportunities identified with your Manager.
- Have regard for the health and safety of persons and premises under your management and operate within LB Merton Council's Health and Safety policies and procedures (complying with health and safety legislation) in relation to the responsibilities of the job.
- Undertake duties commensurate with the grade of the post, as required from time to time

The duties and responsibilities outlined in this job profile are indicative of the role, however they are not exhaustive and may be subject to change. In addition, you will be required to undertake other reasonable duties as directed by your manager.

¹ “closer to home” means both closer to the pupil’s home, and/or closer to Merton and its professional services, including those in the NHS, so that wider systems will be well placed to work together and reduce any risk to the CYP’s health, safety and well-being.



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This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check.

Qualifications & Knowledge

Educated to degree-level or equivalent in a relevant area, or equivalent by experience.

Evidence of continuous managerial and professional development.

Experience and Knowledge

Experience of working in children's social care/education services/adult social care/SEND.

Significant experience of commissioning, contracting and service planning.

Significant experience of implementing strategies and programmes and achieving measurable outcomes.

Experience of writing and presenting complex reports and making appropriate strategic recommendations to the Departmental Management Team.

Extensive experience of stakeholder communication, management and negotiation to a range of audiences.

A demonstrable track record of delivering results on time, to a high quality and to budget.

High quality experience of interpreting and analysing complex finance and SEND data; identifying strategic recommendations for practice.

Significant knowledge of Safeguarding procedures and the application of these with regard to commissioning and contracting.

Extensive knowledge of budget management and the development of financial information systems.

Knowledge of equality and diversity practice and the capability to apply it and promote it in all aspects of employment within Merton Council.

Skills and Abilities

Ability to take lead responsibility for specific strategic and operational services relating to the development of commissioning approaches.

Effective problem solving skills and ability to respond to sudden unexpected demands.

Excellent communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills with the ability to deal with and influence a variety of internal and external stakeholders.

Effective skills in producing quality documentation including reports, ensuring they are suitable for particular audiences.

Ability to promote equality and anti-discriminatory practice, and recognise the importance of equality issues for both staff and service users.

Willing to work flexibly in accordance with policies and procedures to meet the operational needs of the Council.