



SEN Team Leader

Salary: Band 11, £47,181 to £51,356 Per annum, pro rata (£18,872 to £20,542 per annum for 14.8 hours)

Part time: 14.8 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Term-time only working may be considered, with the annual hours worked over 39 weeks. The working pattern will be agreed with the successful candidate and Service Manager.

Location: Civic Offices, Portsmouth, with hybrid working arrangements in line with service needs and council policy.

Reports to: SEN Service Manager

Portsmouth City Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Every post is subject to PCC and Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership safer recruitment procedures.

This role requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at Standard/Enhanced level which will be required prior to any offer of employment and this post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

The SEN Team is a specialist team within Education's Inclusion Service, with links and positive working relationships with many other teams across the council. We are an established team with a strong commitment to supporting children, young people and their families in the city. We work in partnership with schools, early years settings, colleges and other agencies. We aim to treat people with respect, work with integrity and keep children, young people and families at the heart of what we do. Our approach is needs-led and inclusive, so that children and young people are supported as effectively as possible.

The SEN Team will have an important role to play as the Local Authority prepares for the upcoming national SEND reforms, including supporting system-wide improvement, strengthening inclusive practice and ensuring statutory processes remain robust, responsive and child-centred. If this sounds like a team you would like to be part of, we would welcome your application to join us.

The Team

The SEN Team's work is entirely statutory. It involves co-ordinating and managing the Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment process, including issuing, maintaining and reviewing EHC Plans. The team also secures and monitors appropriate educational placements and provision for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities aged 0 to 25. In addition, the team co-ordinates and manages responses to appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability) against



decisions relating to children's and young people's EHC needs assessments and EHC Plans.

The team works with a wide range of professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Paediatricians, Social Workers, Speech & Language Therapists, Head Teachers, and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (or SENCOs). The team regularly works with parents both in responding to their requests and supporting them through complex statutory processes.

The impact of the SEN team's work is both immediate and far reaching – the processes that the team manage and deliver directly affect the educational arrangements and life chances for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the city.

The team operates within a highly complex and changing legislative and organisational framework, including preparation for national SEND reforms and Local Government Reorganisation.

What is the role?

The role of SEN Team Leader is busy, challenging and requires the successful candidate to demonstrate and develop a wide range of skills, knowledge and abilities including the capacity to work under sustained periods of pressure.

The postholder will be expected to model Portsmouth City Council's values in their day-to-day leadership by being respectful, accountable, people-focused, inclusive and collaborative in how they work with families, education settings, partners and colleagues.

The SEN Team Leader is responsible for overseeing the Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment process, securing and monitoring special educational provision and placements, and reviewing EHC Plans for children and young people aged 0 to 25 who have significant, long-term and complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. The postholder will work with the SEN Service Manager to ensure the Local Authority's statutory duties are delivered. This includes quality assurance of all EHC Plans.

The SEN Team Leader manages complex casework, complaints, mediations and appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (SENDIST). The postholder attends and presents cases at our regular multi-agency panel and attends or co-ordinates high-level meetings to resolve issues, move cases forward and make decisions where appropriate. Multi-agency working is a key part of the role.

The above tasks require the SEN Team Leader to have an excellent grasp of written and spoken English, a keen eye for detail and confidence in their administrative and communication skills. They will also need broad knowledge of matters relating to SEN and the confidence to provide advice to team members, parents/carers, educational settings and other professionals.

The SEN Team Leader will need to demonstrate empathy when working with vulnerable families who may feel overwhelmed by their circumstances and concerns about their child's



education. This may be through email, phone call, online meeting or in person. The SEN Team Leader will be expected to work relationally to resolve issues, while following Local Authority processes and agreed decision-making routes.

As the processes delivered by the SEN Team are monitored within statutory timescales and quality assurance frameworks, there can be significant consequences for the Local Authority if these are not met. The SEN Team Leader will therefore need excellent time management skills, including the ability to prioritise competing pressures and ensure work is completed on time and to the required standard. This may require flexibility, including often working beyond standard office hours at key points in the business cycle.

The SEN Team Leader will line manage SEND Advisers and SEN Caseworkers, with responsibility for all HR matters, including supervision of work. The role includes supporting staff wellbeing, encouraging reflective practice, giving clear direction and helping to create a positive and inclusive team culture.

Key tasks

1. Ensure that all statutory duties of the Local Authority relating to EHC needs assessment and placement of 0- to 25-year-olds with special educational needs and disabilities are carried out to a high standard.
2. Support the SEN Service Manager in the development and delivery of authority wide SEN policies.
3. Support the SEN Service Manager with the operational function of the SEN Team, including ongoing development, monitoring and review of statutory processes.
4. Line manage SEND Advisers and SEN Caseworkers, ensuring that their work is carried out to a high standard and supporting their professional development.
5. Supervise the efficient and effective delivery of a large statutory caseload, within statutory timescales.
6. Ensure EHC needs assessment and EHC Plan annual reviews are completed in accordance with statutory processes and timescales.
7. Work closely with children, young people, and their parents and carers.
8. Supervise SEND Advisers to undertake the development, review and amendments of EHC Plans and other legal documentation, in accordance with the required standards.
9. Provide expert advice, guidance and support to a wide range of professionals, and signpost to or involve other services as necessary.
10. Although supported by the SEN Service Manager, you will be expected to work autonomously. You will make and implement decisions on behalf of the local authority within statutory timeframes and to required quality assurance standards.

The statutory framework within which you will work means that there can be significant impact where this is not done correctly.

11. Commission the delivery of identification and assessment work by other education, health and social care professionals such as Teachers, Educational Psychologists, Paediatricians, Therapists and Social Workers.
12. Quality assure, sign off and review legal documentation.
13. Negotiate, broker and secure cost-effective placements for learners with EHCPs in liaison with health and social care colleagues if a multi-agency response / commissioning is required.
14. Advise, support, monitor and constructively challenge schools on the development and delivery of special educational needs provision and policies to ensure vulnerable learners achieve good or better outcomes.
15. Attend annual reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans, including for learners with the most complex needs and learners attending independent or non-maintained specialist provision.
16. Deliver the duties as a member of the city's multi-agency panel, including chairing some meetings, as required by the SEN Service Manager.
17. Ensure decisions and data are recorded accurately on the database, maintain pupil records and contribute to the collection of statutory data.
18. Work closely with education providers to ensure a child or young person with a learning difficulty and/or disability is given appropriate provision and additional learning support and is on a pathway that will lead to a positive, agreed outcome.
19. Work closely with a range of other agencies that are concerned with the welfare of children and young people, including other Inclusion Services, Social Care and the Virtual School.
20. Work within a legislative framework and to statutory requirements.
21. Attend external strategic and multi-agency meetings in a representative capacity.
22. Receive, investigate, respond to and manage complaints, freedom of information requests and any legal challenge against the Local Authority, in liaison with the SEN Service Manager and Head of Inclusion as necessary.
23. Where disputes occur, attend mediation meetings and dispute resolution meetings in a decision-making capacity.
24. Support the preparation of cases for presentation at SEN Tribunals, including attending where required, in liaison with the legal team and SEN Service Manager.

25. Deliver training on SEN-related topics, for example training for the SEN Team and education, health and social care colleagues, including contributing to the SENCO Network.
26. Recruit, induct, train and develop staff to ensure a high-quality service.

Each Team Leader has at least one strategic area which includes:

- Early Years
- Specialist Placement Panels
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Post 16 funding
- Neurodiversity
- Data analysing
- Improving use of Technology
- High-cost placements

Please note: this role does not involve direct working with children and young people, although you may meet them in some meetings.

Who is the person?

Essential criteria:

1. Relevant level 5 qualification or higher, or significant experience in education, health, social care or SEND, preferably within a Local Authority.
2. Detailed knowledge of the Local Authority's SEND statutory duties, including EHC needs assessments, EHC Plans, annual reviews, placements, mediation and Tribunal processes.
3. Experience of working with children, young people and families with SEND, or supporting complex SEND casework.
4. Understanding of safeguarding, confidentiality and appropriate information handling.
5. Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to explain complex information and manage difficult conversations.
6. Ability to work collaboratively with families, education settings, professionals and partner agencies.
7. Ability to work autonomously, manage competing priorities, meet statutory deadlines and know when to seek management guidance.
8. Ability to constructively challenge, negotiate and problem-solve with colleagues, providers and partner agencies to secure appropriate outcomes.
9. Ability to demonstrate behaviours that reflect Portsmouth City Council's values of respect, integrity, being people-focused, inclusion and collaboration.
10. Ability to work flexibly and adapt positively to change, particularly as the service prepares for SEND reforms and Local Government Reorganisation.
11. Competence using Microsoft 365 and case management or database systems.

Desirable criteria:

1. Experience of supervising, mentoring or line managing staff.

2. Experience of preparing for or contributing to SEND Tribunal cases, mediation, complaints or other formal dispute resolution processes.
3. Experience of quality assuring EHC Plans, statutory advice, decision-making records or other SEND-related documentation.
4. Knowledge of Portsmouth's local SEND context, including education settings, specialist provision and relevant partner agencies.
5. Experience of service improvement, policy development, data analysis, panel work or strategic SEND projects.
6. Experience of delivering training, briefings or professional development to colleagues, education settings or multi-agency partners.
7. Experience of undertaking holistic multi-agency assessment work, analysing information and identifying when further casework is required.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Portsmouth City Council is the Data Controller of any personal information you provide when applying for a job. It will only be used in connection with the recruitment process and will not be kept for longer than necessary. For more detailed information you can access the Data Protection Privacy Notice on our careers portal.

You will need to demonstrate that you have the Right to Work in the UK. No post will be offered without it.