

Job Description

Head of SEND

Date: May 2026

Job Family:	Strategy and Transformation
Level:	5
Band:	14
Career Track:	Executive

Job Purpose

To provide strategic leadership for education standards and SEND, supporting the Director of Education, SEND and Skills in delivering the Council's corporate and partnership priorities. The role sets direction for inclusive education, ensuring statutory SEND duties, high-needs funding and commissioning arrangements are aligned for impact. It provides system assurance of education quality, influences schools and partners through policy, resource deployment and performance oversight, and secures additional income and investment to expand provision. As a senior leader across Children's Services, the post holder drives cross-sector alignment, reduces inequality, prevents exclusion, and improves outcomes for children, young people and families across Northumberland.

Duties and Responsibilities

SEND Standards, Assurance and Statutory Compliance

- Act as the principal adviser on assurance of SEND standards, ensuring timely implementation of national legislation, regulation and professional requirements.
- Ensure full compliance with the SEND Code of Practice and all statutory SEND duties and accountabilities.
- Establish and maintain effective assurance and quality frameworks to monitor SEND standards, outcomes and compliance.
- Ensure SEND policies and standards respond to the needs of local communities and individuals, reducing inequality and supporting inclusive education pathways.

Strategic Advice and Education System Oversight

- Oversee the provision of high-quality, timely professional advice to support effective planning and delivery of SEND services.
- Provide strategic oversight of SEND support across schools, colleges, early years and other education settings to ensure consistency and quality.
- Assure that education services effectively meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and support successful learning outcomes.

Funding, Resources and Performance

- Lead work to maximise external funding opportunities and secure additional investment to strengthen SEND provision.

- Ensure robust performance and impact frameworks are in place to track initiatives and demonstrate improved statutory outcomes.
- Oversee the effective deployment and performance of human, financial and physical resources, ensuring value for money and sufficient capacity to meet statutory duties.
- Provide assurance that appropriate financial management, governance and control arrangements are in place across the portfolio.

Strategy, Partnerships and Government Liaison

- Support the development and delivery of major programmes and initiatives aligned to the Council's strategic objectives.
- Scrutinise national policy and external agency plans, assessing their impact on local priorities and positioning the Council as an influential partner.
- Represent and negotiate on behalf of the Council at local, regional and national levels, promoting collaborative approaches to protect and improve outcomes for children and young people.

Culture, Inclusion and Corporate Responsibilities

- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion across all services, ensuring policies and delivery reflect the needs of diverse communities and the workforce.
- Champion a values-based, inclusive and innovative organisational culture that develops workforce capability and improves service quality.
- Undertake corporate responsibilities as required, including roles within emergency planning and election support, and ensure all duties are carried out in line with the Council's constitution, governance arrangements, policies and procedures.

Person Specification

Professional and Technical Requirements

Qualifications

- Relevant professional qualification or equivalent experience
- General management qualification or equivalent demonstrable professional experience

Knowledge, Skills and Experience

- Demonstrable personal and professional integrity underpinning ethical conduct
- Consistent professional behaviour that establishes credibility and trust
- Strong sense of accountability for standards, assurance and public value
- High levels of personal resilience and emotional stamina
- Capacity to sustain energy and focus in complex and demanding environments
- Motivation to contribute to high-quality public services
- Strong alignment with and commitment to the Council's corporate values and principles
- Clear corporate orientation and understanding of system-wide priorities
- Commitment to addressing barriers that restrict organisational progress and service quality
- Ability to operate effectively within politically, legally and publicly sensitive contexts
- Evidence of up-to-date management training
- Evidence of recent and ongoing Continuous Professional Development
- Professional credibility grounded in experience of education standards, including SEND

Core Competency Requirements

Communication: Shapes messaging to support service delivery and stakeholder engagement. Influences decisions and builds shared understanding in complex environments.

Collaboration: Develops strategic partnerships with public, private, voluntary, and community sectors to deliver council priorities.

Service Delivery: Oversees service delivery aligned to council priorities. Leads transformation, manages risk, and applies strategic thinking to maximise outcomes and ensure cost effectiveness.

Decision-Making: Applies strategic judgement to optimise resources and deliver meaningful outcomes.

Digital & Data Literacy: Uses data for strategic planning and innovation. Applies digital solutions to improve services and manage risk. Interprets complex datasets to inform service design and policy.

Adaptability: Anticipates future trends and prepares services for change. Embeds continuous improvement practices and supports teams to adapt and innovate.

Problem-Solving: Solves complex service delivery challenges using evidence and insight to redesign ways of working and drive innovation.

Community & Customer Focus: Aligns services with community priorities and customer expectations, ensure representation and accessibility.

Leadership: Coaches and delegates to drive performance and service delivery. Leads programmes and actively plans for succession and talent development.

Strengths

Analytical: You seek and analyse information to inform your decisions, based on the best available evidence.

Catalyst: You are self-motivated to act towards achieving a goal. You are confident using your own initiative to take forward actions

Change Agent: You are positive and inspirational in leading and supporting others through change.

Confident: You take charge of situations, people and decisions. You communicate with confidence and give direction.

Decisive: You use your judgement. You take a considered approach to situations and tasks when making decisions.