

Participation Officer

Full time: 37 Hours per Week

Salary: £33149.62 per annum, Band 2 SP 29 on Cognus pay scales

Location: Cognus Office Cantium House, Wallington

Cognus is seeking a passionate and proactive Participation Officer to lead the operational delivery of our Participation Strategy for Children Looked After and care-experienced young adults. This pivotal role will ensure that the voices, experiences, and aspirations of young people are embedded across the London Borough of Sutton's Corporate Parenting Partnership. If you're ready to champion meaningful engagement, influence policy and practice, and build vibrant platforms for youth voice — we want to hear from you.

The successful candidate will bring proven experience of working directly with children and young people, particularly those with care experience, in both group and one-to-one settings. They will be confident in leading participation activities, coordinating events, and working collaboratively with partner agencies to deliver meaningful engagement opportunities. With a strong understanding of safeguarding, risk assessment, and inclusive practice, they will be skilled at building trusted relationships with young people from diverse backgrounds, while also providing appropriate challenge and influence at all levels of leadership. The ideal candidate will be highly organised, self-motivated, and able to work flexibly — including school holidays and occasional evenings and weekends — to ensure young people's voices are consistently heard and acted upon.

You will give us great commitment and in return we offer an excellent package including:

- i) Starting salary of £33149.62 per annum, Cognus Band 2, spinal point 29
- ii) Workplace pension scheme 4% to 8% matched contributions
- iii) 28 days annual leave pro rata (plus Bank Holidays)
- iv) Regular manager support and supervision.
- v) Hybrid and Flexible working
- vi) Staff benefits package; currently including Employee Assistance Programme, life insurance, employee benefits platform and (upon completion of probation) health care [Cognus reserves the right to adjust these additional discretionary benefits to improve quality of their services provided, maintain affordability for the Company and to ensure benefits remain fit for purpose with staff needs.]
- vii) Staff EDI group and Mental Health First Aiders to support wellbeing and inclusion
- viii) Cognus Coaching Programmes
- ix) An ambitious culture with friendly and supportive colleagues

If you are interested and would like to be considered for this role, please apply to recruitment@cognus.org.uk with the completed [application form](https://www.cognus.org.uk/work-with-us/current-vacancies/cognus-application-form/) downloaded from <https://www.cognus.org.uk/work-with-us/current-vacancies/cognus-application-form/> outlining your suitability. The deadline for receipt is **5pm on Monday 17th November 2025**. Candidates are requested to be available for interviews on **Monday 1st December 2025**.





For an informal conversation about the role please contact Kate Leyshon, Headteacher, Sutton Virtual School at kate.leyshon@cognus.org.uk.

All offers of employment are subject to successful completion of recruitment formalities which includes an enhanced DBS check. These checks must have been completed prior to commencement of employment. We expect our staff to have due regard for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and to follow the child protection procedures adopted by the Company and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

We have several other roles we are recruiting to at different levels within Cognus. Please get in touch for an informal conversation about these and other opportunities if you or anyone else you know may be interested in working with us.



JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION:	Participation Officer Full time 37 hours
DIVISION:	Sutton Virtual School
REPORTS TO:	Participation Lead
GRADE/PAY:	Cognus Band 2, Spinal Point 29 £33149.62 per annum

1. ROLE PROFILE:

To facilitate the golden thread through participation, engagement, impact and outcomes across the partnership

To influence policies, practice and strategies to ensure care experience as a protected characteristic is understood

To lead the operational delivery of the Participation Strategy

2. JOB SUMMARY:

The post holder will develop:

- a vibrant and dynamic Children in Care Council
- post 18 care leaver engagement
- links to local youth engagement and participation programmes
- links with Sutton Virtual School enrichment activities
- enhance the voices, views, experiences and aspirations of children in care and care experienced young people through operational activities
- will offer advocacy, support to children and young people from all backgrounds, and robust challenge/ dialogue to all layers of management and leadership within Cognus and partner agencies

3. BUDGETARY ACCOUNTABILITIES:

- Administration of £10k Participation budget to be used for events and operational costs

4. SPECIFIC ACCOUNTABILITIES:

The main duties and responsibilities of the postholder are indicated below although other duties of an appropriate level and nature will also be required.

1. To deliver service activities and manage workload to ensure intended outcomes are delivered within agreed service standards.
2. To manage and coordinate staff supporting participation and engagement activities
3. To plan effectively to ensure health and safety and safeguarding protocols are followed
4. To lead the operational delivery of Participation and publishing an annual Participation report.



5. Coordinate all activity taking place and taking learning from best practice from elsewhere.
6. Coordinate with key partner agencies, to develop and deliver a calendar of events
7. Engage with wider participation work within the borough including the Young Commissioners and Voice and Influence work stream
8. To utilise attendance and participation data to influence recruitment, engagement and partnership working.
9. Provide training and support to young people (prepare young people to present at strategic meetings).
10. Challenge disproportionality at all levels in practice
11. To monitor impact of service delivery, and to provide regular updates on participation activity to the Corporate Parenting Forum
12. To lead the delivery of the Children in Care Council and to support children and young people who may be unable to attend. To ensure the provision of a monthly meeting accessible to Children in Care and Care Leavers, raise awareness and promote attendance at meetings.
13. To liaise with Children's Services' colleagues to inform and advise them on the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers activities through a programme of activities, events, and other creative mechanisms, providing both term time and school holiday activities.

GENERIC OBJECTIVES:

Contribute to Cognus Limited's business objectives at the appropriate level by ensuring every child matters and has access to education and learning opportunities, including:

- a. Health and safety
- b. Safeguarding and protection of children
- c. Equal opportunities and management of diversity
- d. Data protection
- e. Outstanding Customer care

GENERAL:

SAFER RECRUITMENT:

Cognus is committed to safeguarding and protecting the children and young people that it works with. An offer of employment is subject to safer recruitment practices which include an enhanced DBS check, two professional references acceptable to Cognus Limited, proof of qualifications, proof of right to work in the UK, proof of personal address and employment history covering 5 years and, fitness to work with children (occupational health assessment). These checks must have been completed prior to commencement of employment. We have a range of policies and procedures in place which promote safeguarding and safer working practices across the organisation.

PROCESSING OF DATA:

- a. You ("the employee") consent to the holding and processing of personal data provided by you to the Company ("the Company") for all purposes relating to your employment, but not limited to administering and maintaining personnel records, paying and reviewing salary and other remuneration and benefits, undertaking performance appraisals and reviews, the compulsory Disclosure and Baring Services check (DBS) details in line with its statutory responsibility to



safeguard and protect children and vulnerable service users; maintaining sickness and other absence records and taking decisions as to your fitness for work.

- b. You hereby acknowledge and agree that the Company may, in the course of its general and statutory duties as an employer be required to disclose personal data relating to you for legislative purposes during or after the end of your employment. This does not affect your statutory rights under the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT:

- a. During the course of your employment, you will have access to and knowledge of Company confidential information and trade secrets.
- b. Disclosure of any of this confidential information and/or trade secrets could have serious financial consequences and/or create serious competitive disadvantages for the Company. There may be material damage, financial or otherwise, deliberate or otherwise, to the Company's legitimate business interest.
- c. Under the terms of this confidentiality agreement, you agree to keep secret and shall not at any time, either during employment or post-employment, use, communicate or reveal to any person any trade secret or confidential information relating to the Company or any Associated Company.
- d. You are aware of the Company's policies in relation to compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and undertake to act in accordance with these at all times. Any breach of these policies will be dealt with under the Company's disciplinary procedure and action taken can include dismissal without notice.



This job description and person specification outlines the summary of key accountabilities and is not an exhaustive list of duties and, is subject to periodical review and changes in line with the business needs.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

No	Description	Criteria
<i>The postholder will be expected to have:</i>		
a.	An awareness of the needs of Children Looked After	D/I/S
b.	Experience of working extensively with children and leading activities	E/I/S
c.	Experience of working confidently with leaders and children, young people, parents and carers	E/I/S
d.	Experience of safeguarding and carrying out risk assessments	D/I
e.	Experience of engaging with young people, on a one-to-one basis and with their peers, family and school/college or training provider	E/I/S
f.	Willingness to work across the week, including during school holidays, and occasionally at evenings and weekends to deliver events and engage partners and young people	E/I
g.	Understanding of the multi-agency partnership and ability to develop mutually beneficial working practices, collaborative approaches and shared objectives	D/I
<i>Candidates must be able to demonstrate the ability to:</i>		
h.	Quickly and effectively build relationships with those who may not be willing to engage, using innovative and meaningful approaches	E/I
i.	Organise and prioritise own workload and maintain high standards under pressure	E/I
j.	Build professional rapport and develop relationships with young people and their families to support the active involvement of young people at all times.	E/I
k.	Ensure all health and safety standards are adhered to for the relevant work area.	E/I/S
l.	Fully risk assess and contingency plan for all events in accordance with the Sutton Trips and Visits processes e.g. Evolve	D/I
m.	Apply diversity and equal opportunities policies in the workplace.	E/I/S
n.	Act in accordance with all relevant policies and procedures including safeguarding, first aid, health and safety and equality and diversity.	E/I/S
o.	Carry out duties and responsibilities in accordance with Cognus policies	E/I/S

KEY:		D	Desirable	I	Evaluated at interview
E	Essential	S	Short listing criteria	T	Subject to test

