

Tribunal and Mediation Officer – SEND Transformation

Full time: 37 Hours per Week – 24 Month Fixed Term Contract

Salary: £48,624.17, Cognus Band 4 SCP 58

Location: Cognus Office, First Floor, Cantium House, Wallington, SM6 0DZ

Cognus Limited is a Local Authority Traded Company, which is commissioned by the London Borough of Sutton to provide education services to early years providers, mainstream schools and specialist education settings in Sutton. Wholly owned by the local authority, we deliver a wide range of high-quality services to deliver excellent practice that improve the lives of children, young people, and families in Sutton and beyond.

We are looking for an experienced Tribunal and Mediation Officer to join our highly effective and committed team. This role will work alongside colleagues to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND within the London Borough of Sutton.

Young people with special educational needs have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most others of the same age. These children and young people may need additional learning support from that given to others of the same age. For those children and young people with a higher complexity of needs, requiring high levels of special educational provision, the Local Authority (LA) will support them through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The role of the Tribunal and Mediation Officer is to hold a caseload of tribunal appeals, coordinate and collate information to support the Local Authority (LA) in a timely and high-quality way where there is a dispute about the identification of special educational needs, to facilitate support arrangements or placements and ensure all professionals required to provide evidence as part of the appeal comply in a timely way. The role will involve attending resolution meetings with parents and other professionals in an attempt to settle the disputed issues without the need for formal legal redress, wherever possible. The role also involves line management of the Assistant Tribunal and Mediation Officer. The role involves working in a multi-agency model with all partner teams and services, and close partnership with South London Legal Partnership

This exciting role includes responsibility for negotiating changes to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Where such approaches do not lead to resolution within a supportive framework, you will need to represent the Local Authority at the First Tier Tribunal hearings (also known as Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal) to present the Local Authority's case and defend the appropriateness of the proposed service provision/decision for an individual child.

Much of this role will be working from detailed reports about the young person's special needs and collating evidence to support or amend proposed service provision for individual young people. In addition, this role entails acting as the SEND Service responded to Complaints and Judicial Reviews, including pre-action protocol letters, and some Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, as well as entering formal mediation as the Local Authority representative.

We are looking for a good negotiator with outstanding written and verbal communication skills and a strong eye for accuracy and detail. As well as an ability to be organised, using your initiative and working to tight statutory deadlines, you need to be flexible in approach and have good general ICT skills. Experience of legal or tribunal processes and working within the field of and/or an understanding of special educational needs legislation in relation to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).



Cognus Limited is about education. We believe there is no limit to learning and that learning is lifelong. Since our creation in November 2016, we exist to support schools, families, children and young people to access education and enjoy learning. Every child matters to us and we believe that access to education and learning is every child's fundamental right. We foresee every child and young person to achieve their full potential through education leading them to be our future leaders, professionals and economically active global citizens. Our children and young people are our future, and we believe that every child is worth fighting for regardless of their abilities, disabilities, colour, creed, race, religion or ethnic origin.

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

- i) Salary of £48,624.17 per annum (Cognus Band 4, 24 Month Fixed Term Contract)
- 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, Perkbox and (upon completion of probation) Sovereign Healthcare Cashback plans *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 midnight on **Thursday 21st May 2026**. **Online interviews** will take place on **2nd and 3rd of June 2026**.

Interview venue: Online

Interview format: Teams video call. There is no written task

- Invites will be sent by 5pm on Wednesday 27th May, following the shortlisting process, to those candidates shortlisted.

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact Alex Waring, SEND Transformation Lead at alex.waring@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 before the 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 Sutton's Local Safeguarding Partnership.

We are an equal opportunity employer and value diversity at our company. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, colour, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability status.



JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION:	Tribunal and Mediation Officer
DIVISION:	SEND Transformation Programme
REPORTS TO:	SEND Transformation Lead
GRADE/PAY:	£48,624.17 per annum, Cognus Band 4 SCP 58 (24 Month Fixed Term Contract)
LOCATION:	Cognus Office, First Floor, Cantium House, Wallington, SM6 0DZ

JOB SUMMARY

To plan and coordinate efficient and effective disagreement resolution processes to secure the highest standard in the defence of the Local Authorities (LA) decisions under appeal, with reference to EHC assessments and plans, placement and reviews of EHCP; to undertake mediation meetings to achieve successful agreement where possible with schools, parents, other LA teams and wider services.

To act as a lead officer in representing the LA at the First Tier Tribunal in cases where agreement cannot be reached on provision/placement; ensuring a high standard of presentation of the LA's case during the appeal process, including at hearings, and that all cases are progressed according to the prescribed timescales. This will include post hearing/order work.

To act as the respondee to Complaints and Judicial Reviews, including pre action protocol letters, and some Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, as well entering formal mediation as the Local Authority representative.

PRINCIPLE ACCOUNTABILITIES:

- a. To plan and coordinate efficient and effective disagreement resolution processes to secure the highest standard in the defence of the Local Authorities decisions under appeal, with reference to EHC assessments and plans, placement and reviews of EHCP; to undertake mediation meetings to achieve successful agreement where possible with schools, parents, other LA teams and wider services.
- b. To act as a lead officer in representing the LA at the First Tier Tribunal (SENDisT) in cases under appeal; ensuring a timely and high standard of presentation of the LA's case at hearings and during the entire process, and that all cases are progressed according to the prescribed timescales.
- c. To contribute to the credibility of the SEND Service by managing the appeals process with integrity and professionalism, ensuring that Local Authority decisions are robustly and fairly defended.
- d. To ensure that the new statutory and local policy performance indicators for the Tribunal Team are embedded within practice, updated monthly and met in full.
- e. To attend and influence the South London Tribunal User Group.
- f. To enter formal mediation on behalf of the SEND service.
- g. For pupils with SEND, ensure that schools use delegated SEN funding efficiently to improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs.
- h. For pupils with SEND, to promote the policy of inclusion of children and young people with SEND in state-funded mainstream or special schools wherever possible, drawing on strong negotiation and influencing skills across a range of complex SEND issues between parents, schools and multi-disciplinary practitioners.
- i. In cases where the legal team has been instructed to be the instructing officer throughout the entire process, including attendance at hearing and post hearing work.



- j. To ensure a seamless approach across the SEND service in the delivery of the service and customer care, including a timely upload of all documentation referring to a child or young person's case under appeal and a complete handover to the SEND team when concluding the appeal.
- k. To work directly with parents, schools, parental appointed legal representatives and other professional bodies within the statutory and legal framework related to the First Tier Tribunal process.
- l. Support colleagues to prepare chronologies and any other necessary paperwork, arrange and chair conferences with witnesses and perform other duties in relation to First Tier Tribunal Appeals.
- m. Coordinate and collate information to support the Local Authority decisions where there is a dispute regarding duties under section 3 CFA and section 9 COP.
- n. Ensure all documentation linked to SEND appeals is distributed appropriately and within specified time restraints.
- o. Present the Local Authority's cases at the First Tier Tribunal and defend appropriately.
- p. Coordinate allocation and attendance processes linked to resolution of all disputes relating to the SEND tribunal process.
- q. Arrange strategy meetings in line with the Protocol for Appeals regarding duties under section 3 CFA and section 9 COP.
- r. Attend resolution meetings with parents and other professionals in an attempt to settle disputed issues without the need for formal legal redress wherever possible. This will include responsibility for negotiating changes to the EHC plans.
- s. Engage with schools and other agencies to develop an awareness and understanding of the issues in relation to assessment and planning and person-centred approaches.
- t. Offer coaching and training to service members to ensure consistency of approach, sharing and promoting best practice through the dissemination of statutory guidance and the learning from case studies.
- u. Take responsibility for ensuring that the computerised database information is accurate and up to date at all times and that action is undertaken as required to ensure production of accurate and timely information.
- v. Use management information and data to develop a framework and policies to help improve efficiency and effectiveness of the service and to ensure consistency of decision making through EHC assessments, plans and annual reviews.
- w. Contribute to the wider SEND service aspirations, identifying opportunities to achieve integrated working on a multi-agency basis. Work as an effective team member within the wider SEND service.
- x. Deliver termly training to the SEND team and bi-annual to partners reflective of Tribunal decisions so there is a cycle of learning from each appeal.

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

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

No	Description	Criteria
1)	Ability to draft and prepare correspondence and reports which are accurate in terms of content, grammar and spelling.	E
2)	Ability to analyse and interpret detailed and complex information and to use such information to benefit work objectives.	E
3)	Ability to quickly assimilate information and make informed decisions under short time constraints.	E
4)	Proven ability to communicate effectively in both written and oral form with a variety of audiences to ensure that key issues are identified and understood.	E
5)	Proven negotiation skills that achieve desired outcomes.	E
6)	Ability to work with minimum supervision, balancing using own initiative against need to seek management guidance.	E
7)	Proven ability to work collaboratively as an effective wider team member to achieve service aspirations.	E
8)	Ability to acquire and apply new knowledge to ensure that work/advice is consistent and reliable.	E
9)	Proven ability to anticipate problems and achieve workable solutions to complex problems and to ensure contingencies are planned for.	E
10)	Ability to identify work priorities and manage team workload to meet deadlines, ensuring objectives and targets are achieved with minimal disruption.	E
11)	Ability to take responsibility for the overall quality of the work of individual team members.	E
12)	Ability to performance manage to ensure the Tribunal and Mediation Officer Assistant is supported in carrying out their role.	E
13)	Ability to demonstrate sensitivity and objectivity in dealing with emotive and confidential issues.	E
14)	Ability to reflect and learn from appeals and share the learning.	E
15)	Ability to extract and present data from appeals and mediation.	E
16)	Ability to form a rapport with the appellants so there is a cordiality to the management of the appeal process where possible and pertinent.	E
No	Experience and Qualifications	Criteria
17)	In depth knowledge and understanding of current SEND legislation and reform, statutory procedures and processes governing the provision of services for children & young people with special educational needs.	E
18)	Knowledge and understanding of the impact of SEND on children and young people's educational outcomes and the Preparation for Adulthood agenda.	E



19)	Knowledge and understanding of budgetary considerations and duty to ensure efficient use of public resources.	E
20)	Knowledge and experience of working with Windows software; MS Excel, MS Word, Adobe (or similar software to create e-bundles for Tribunal).	E
21)	Experience of using a computerised database to support service delivery.	E
22)	Experience of communicating with children and their families concerning complex issues.	E
23)	Proven track record of complex case management in a multi-disciplinary environment.	E
24)	Evidence of recent professional development.	D
25)	Experience of working in a Local Authority/an educational environment/a legal environment.	D
26)	Knowledge and experience of legal and tribunal processes.	D
Personal Attributes/Others		
27)	Ability to support and challenge team members and other professionals as required.	E
28)	Ability to demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to adapt to change.	E
29)	Ability to work calmly and effectively under pressure and meet deadlines.	E
30)	Reliability, honesty and a commitment to maintaining confidentiality.	E
31)	A commitment to equalities in service delivery and employment and evidence of successful implementation of equalities in practice.	E
32)	Ability to work flexible hours to meet to needs of the service.	E

Key:	D	Desirable	I	Evaluated at interview	
E	Essential	S	Shortlisting criteria	T	Subject to test

