

Experts at Hand Operational Lead

Full Time: 37 Hours per Week – 2 Years Fixed Contract

Salary: Cognus Band 5 starting salary £66,833 up to £75,060

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

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 improves the lives of children, young people, and families in Sutton and beyond.

Shape the future of SEND support in Sutton and make a lasting difference to children, young people and families.

This is a rare opportunity to lead the operational delivery of significant SEND reforms. Experts at Hand is a major national initiative designed to bring specialist education and health expertise directly into mainstream schools, early years settings and colleges, helping children get the right support earlier and improving inclusion across local communities.

Working across the London Borough of Sutton, you will be responsible for coordinating and driving the implementation of Sutton's Experts at Hand model, ensuring multidisciplinary teams, schools, health professionals and wider partners work together to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This role is about turning ambition into action, building effective systems, leading change and ensuring support reaches those who need it most.

As the operational lead, you will oversee the deployment of significant investment in SEND reform, lead a team of skilled professionals and play a pivotal role in developing inclusive practice across schools and settings. Your work will help children access support earlier, strengthen mainstream provision and reduce barriers to learning and participation.

We are looking for an experienced operational leader with a strong understanding of SEND and inclusion, excellent partnership skills and a track record of delivering change within complex, multi-agency environments. If you are passionate about inclusion, skilled at bringing people together and motivated by the opportunity to improve life chances for children and young people, we would love to hear from you.

Join us and help build a more inclusive future for Sutton's children and young people.

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

- i) Starting salary of £66,833 per annum (Cognus Band 5)
- 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, which can be [downloaded from our website](#), outlining your suitability.

The deadline for receipt is midnight on **Sunday 6th September 2026**. Candidates are requested to be available for a face-to-face interview on **Wednesday 16th September 2026**.

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact **Kieran Holiday, Director for Education, Integrated Support and Safer Communities** at Kieran.Holliday@sutton.gov.uk or **Joanna Cassey, Cognus Managing Director** at Joanna.Cassey@cognus.org.uk

All offers of employment are subject to successful completion of recruitment formalities, which include 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 based on race, religion, colour, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability status.



JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION:	Experts at Hand Operational Lead
DIVISION:	SEND Reform and Improvement
REPORTS TO:	Director for Education, Integrated Support and Safer Communities Accountable to: Managing Director, Cognus Limited (matrix relationship)
GRADE/PAY:	Band 5 SP 78 to SP 86 £66,833 – £75,060
LOCATION:	Cognus Office, First Floor, Cantium House, Wallington, SM6 0DZ (base) Hybrid – schools, settings, council offices across Sutton

JOB SUMMARY

The Experts at Hand Operational Lead will provide operational leadership for the delivery and implementation of Sutton's Experts at Hand (EAH) model as a key component of the Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.

The postholder will be responsible for establishing, coordinating and overseeing the delivery of multidisciplinary inclusion support across education, health and care services, ensuring that agreed strategies and reform priorities are translated into effective operational practice.

Working across schools, early years settings, post-16 providers and partner agencies, the role will lead the mobilisation of services, deployment of resources and implementation of operational systems that strengthen inclusion, improve early intervention and increase capacity within mainstream provision. The postholder will ensure that services are coordinated effectively, performance is monitored, and outcomes for children and young people are improved through timely, evidence-informed support.

While contributing to strategic planning and service development, the primary focus of the role is operational leadership, performance management and continuous improvement of the EAH model and associated inclusion services.

PRINCIPLE ACCOUNTABILITIES:

Operational Leadership and Programme Delivery

- Lead the implementation and day-to-day operational delivery of the Experts at Hand model across Sutton.
- Develop and maintain operational systems, processes and pathways to support effective multidisciplinary support and ways of working.
- Ensure the coordinated deployment of EAH resources, specialist support and intervention services across schools and settings.
- Lead the operational oversight of Teams Around the School arrangements and associated inclusion support mechanisms.
- Ensure services are delivered in line with agreed priorities, performance standards and programme milestones.
- Identify operational risks, barriers and system pressures, implementing timely solutions to support delivery.



Service Coordination and Partnership Working

- Act as a key operational link between strategic SEND reform activity and frontline delivery.
- Foster strong collaborative relationships across NHS therapy services, Educational Psychology, outreach services, traded services, Local Authority teams, and wider SEND professionals to ensure coordinated and effective support for children and young people
- Build and maintain effective working relationships with schools, academies, early years settings, colleges and partner organisations (Social Care, Family Hubs, Health & education) to ensure joined up intervention.
- Represent the EAH programme at strategic governance boards and local area partnership forums.

Inclusion and Support to Settings

- Oversee targeted support to settings experiencing inclusion pressures.
- Ensure data and intelligence informs the deployment of EAH resources and support and identify trends and gaps in provision, practice, and systems.
- Support settings to develop confidence in meeting a broader range of needs within mainstream environments.
- Support the development of high-quality Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) across the local area.

Performance, Quality Assurance and Improvement

- Establish and monitor operational performance measures, service standards and quality assurance processes.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of EAH interventions and support services.
- Prepare reports for governance boards, programme boards and senior leaders.
- Use service data, stakeholder feedback and outcome information to drive continuous improvement.
- Ensure learning from operational delivery informs future service planning and development and commissioning.

Leadership and People Management

- Lead, manage and develop SEND Inclusion Advisors.
- Establish a culture of accountability, collaboration and continuous improvement.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate supervision, support and professional development.
- Promote effective multidisciplinary work and professional challenge where required.

Financial and Resource Management

- The post holder will have financial oversight for the deployment of the EAH funding allocations from DfE and reporting into the Local Authority and SEND Reform and Improvement
- Manage and oversee the deployment of Experts at Hand funding and associated resources in line with agreed priorities and programme objectives.



- Monitor expenditure, forecasts and delivery against budget plans.
- Ensure compliance with funding requirements, reporting expectations and governance arrangements.
- Demonstrate effective use of resources and value for money through robust performance monitoring.

Other

- To carry out other reasonable duties as required.

COMPETANCIES:

Operational Leadership and Delivery

- Proven ability to lead complex operational programmes across multiple organisations.
- Ability to translate policy and strategic objectives into practical delivery plans and measurable outcomes.
- Experience of implementing service change and embedding new ways of working.
- Ability to manage competing priorities and deliver results in a complex environment.

Partnership and Influencing Skills

- Strong partnership working skills across education, health and care sectors.
- Ability to influence senior stakeholders without direct authority.
- Skilled in negotiation, facilitation and collaborative problem-solving.
- Experience of working within multi-agency environments.

Analysis, Planning and Performance

- Ability to use data and intelligence to inform decision-making and resource deployment.
- Strong performance management and quality assurance skills.
- Experience of monitoring outcomes and driving service improvement.
- Ability to anticipate risks and implement mitigating actions.

People Leadership

- Experience of leading and developing professional staff.
- Ability to motivate teams and drive high performance.
- Strong communication and relationship-management skills.
- Commitment to coaching, professional development and continuous learning.

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 before 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 Barring 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 outline 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
A	Qualifications and Professional Experience Essential • Degree-level qualification or equivalent professional qualification in education, therapy, health, social care, SEND, inclusion or a related discipline. • Significant experience working within education, SEND, inclusion, children's services, health or related environments. • Experience of leading complex operational programmes, projects or service delivery across multiple organisations. • Experience of implementing service change, transformation programmes and new ways of working. • Experience of direct line management and of leading and developing professional staff and multidisciplinary teams. • Experience of working within multi-agency environments involving education, health and care partners. • Experience of monitoring performance, evaluating outcomes and driving service improvement. • Experience of using data, intelligence and performance information to inform decision-making and resource deployment. Desirable • Professional qualification in a therapy, specialist support or SEND-related discipline. • Experience of budget management and resource allocation within public sector services. • Experience of working within a local area SEND partnership or SEND reform programme.
B	Knowledge Essential • Strong understanding of the SEND system and inclusive practice across educational settings. • Knowledge of the mainstream education landscape including academies, maintained schools and specialist provision. • Understanding of early years and post-16 education systems. • Knowledge of current SEND and inclusion reforms and national policy developments.



	• Understanding of early intervention and preventative approaches to improving outcomes for children and young people. • Understanding of multidisciplinary and partnership approaches to supporting children and young people with additional needs. Desirable • Broad understanding of specialist support services including: ○ Speech and Language Therapy ○ Occupational Therapy ○ Physiotherapy ○ Educational Psychology ○ Mental Health Support Services • Understanding of commissioning and service design within local authority or integrated services environments.
C	Personal Attributes Essential The postholder will demonstrate: • A strong commitment to inclusion and improving outcomes for children and young people. • Resilience and adaptability in complex and changing environments. • Collaborative and solution-focused leadership. • Professionalism, integrity and accountability. • Ability to work at pace whilst maintaining effective relationships. • Confidence operating across both strategic and operational contexts. • Commitment to continuous improvement, innovation and learning. • Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. • Work flexibly as required • Honours and upholds the Company's Equal Opportunity Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Safeguarding and Protection of Children, Health and Safety and Data Protection Policy at all times.

