



SEN Caseworker - Dispute Resolution/Mediations and Tribunals

Barnet Education & Learning Service (BELS)

Closing Date: 02/06/2024

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Barnet Education & Learning Service (BELS)

Our Services

<https://www.bels.org.uk/>

In September 2020, Barnet Council entered into a new strategic partnership with Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS), a limited company wholly owned by the council, to provide the council's education services.

The partnership was established in consultation with Barnet schools and the steering group of the Parent-Carer Forum.

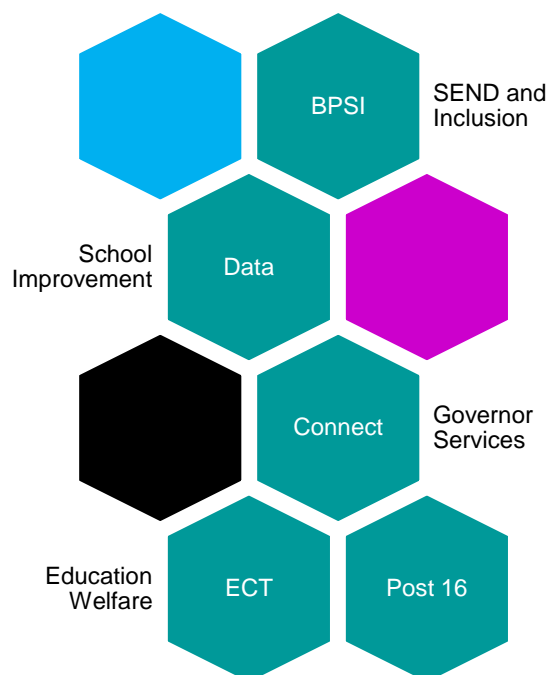
The aim of establishing the partnership is to

- Maintain and continue to develop Barnet's excellent education offer.
- Maintain and continue to develop the excellent relationship between the Council and schools.
- Achieve further budget savings if required.

The partnership is governed by a series of boards on which schools, settings and other stakeholders are represented that steer the strategic direction of the partnership in delivering school improvement, services for children with special educational needs and school place planning.

Performance against all three objectives for the partnership has been strong both before BELS was established and since then. Between April 2016 and August 2020 the service was run through a partnership between the council and Cambridge Education. Educational progress and achievement have improved consistently year on year. 97% of Barnet schools are good or outstanding and Barnet is now in the top 10% for almost all measures and the top 5% for many of the measures. The service has met all the budget targets for savings that were agreed with the council over the last five years.

There is also a very strong and experienced management team in place within the Education and Learning service, which has the confidence of schools, members, Council officers and other stakeholders.



BELS is responsible for the following services:

- Development and implementation of the council's education strategy, along with its Schools and Settings Improvement Strategy, SEND and Disabilities Strategy, School Places Strategy and Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy.
- Strategic support and advice to the schools Forum and oversight of the Dedicated Schools Budget
- School and settings improvement (including early years)
- Statutory local authority services, such as monitoring, supporting and challenging schools, and intervening in maintained schools where necessary
- The Virtual School
- Special Educational Needs statutory processes including assessment and placements
- SEN Transport – assessment, brokerage, contract and budget management
- Educational psychology team
- SEN specialist support services
- Pupil place planning
- Admissions
- Education welfare service
- Post 16 education and skills, including monitoring, tracking and supporting participation
- Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance service
- Traded services to schools:
 - Barnet Partnership for School Improvement (BPSI)
 - Governor services
 - Newly Qualified Teachers support
 - Education Welfare Service
 - Educational psychology
 - Inclusion Advisory Team
 - Connect (formerly North London Schools International Network)
 - Foreign Language Assistants
 - Data Service

Staff Terms and Conditions

Staff working for BELS are employed on terms and conditions that are aligned with national agreements for staff working in local authorities except in respect of pensions.

New staff joining BELS who join and want to contribute to a Pension Scheme will become members of AVIVA – the Pension provider for BELS. Staff can contribute 4.5% of their salary into the Scheme and BELS will match this. There is also an option of increasing contributions to 7% with BELS also contributing at this rate. Contributions higher than this will not be matched by BELS.

As BELS is not a Local Authority, the company does not come under the Modification Order and therefore does not recognise continuous employment from other Local Authorities/schools. Your continuous service will start on the date you join the organisation.

Your annual leave is based on the grade and years of continuous service. Upon their start, employees will be entitled to 26 days plus 8 Bank holidays per annum – pro-rated for part timers and this would increase with service.

It is a standard practice that prospective employees are offered the starting point of the pay scale and it is expected that staff will progress through the spine points on an annual basis. However, if there is a strong case to pay above the minimum of the scale, the relevant service Director would consider the case.

Letter to applicants

May 2024

Department: SEN Team
Contact Officer: Feray Souleiman
Telephone: 02083597007

Dear Applicant,

Post: SEN Caseworker – Dispute Resolution , Mediations and Tribunals

Thank you for the interest you have shown in the above opportunity.

This Job Information Pack gives a full explanation of the job and working for Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS), which I hope will encourage you to apply for the post.

Closing date for applications: 02/06/2024

Interviews will be held on: 10/06/2024.

If you would like to discuss this position on an informal basis, please contact me on 0208 359 7007.

It is important to us at BELS that our organisation reflects all members of our community and we strongly encourage members of ethnic minority communities to apply.

I look forward to receiving an application from you.

Yours faithfully

Feray Souleiman

Job Title: SEN Caseworker – Dispute Resolution , Mediations and Tribunals

Contract Type: Fixed Term 18 months

Hours: 36 hours per week (1.0 FTE)

Salary Range: £39,951 - £42,840 Per Annum

We are seeking to appoint a caseworker for Dispute Resolution, Mediations and Tribunals. The successful candidate will have primary responsibility for :-

- The daily operational and business needs of the Tribunals and Mediations service within the SEN team.
- In this challenging opportunity you will need experience of Tribunals and Mediations processes and have excellent communication and negotiation skills to support the SEN team to ensure long term sustainability.
- Excellent opportunity to develop particular skills or training provided or challenging role.

Experience and/or knowledge of SEND legislation is essential. In return, you will be offered training and an opportunity to develop skills in the SEN environment. You will be given regular supervision and be part of a thriving dynamic team.

For an informal discussion about the post please contact Feray Souleiman, Head of SEN assessments and placements on 0208 359 7007.

Closing date for applications: 02/06/2024

Interviews will be held on: 10/06/2024.

To apply for this post, please click on 'Apply' button below. If you need assistance, please email the BELS HR Team at: hr.barnetbels@barnet.gov.uk. quoting job title.

Barnet Education and Learning Service are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

An enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) with barred list check is required for all successful applicants. In addition, if this post is likely to come under the requirements of the Childcare (Disqualification) 2009 Regulations, the successful applicant will be required to declare.

We value diversity.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Service:	Children's Service
Job Title:	SEN Caseworker – Dispute Resolution , Mediations and Tribunals
Grade:	29 - 32
Reports to:	Tribunals and Mediations Manager

Essential Qualifications required.

Type	Level required
Professional qualifications/memberships	Degree level qualification, preferably in an education or legal discipline
Education	Degree level qualification, preferably in an education or legal discipline

Technical / Knowledge Requirements

Type	Description
ICT skills	Competent and confident in the use of standard Microsoft Office products such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint. Proven experience and competency in the effective use of ICT databases and record storage and retrieval systems. Proven ability to handle confidential personal information in an appropriate and secure manner.
Project Management	Ability to carry lead on projects or operational processes related to the work environment in a multi-agency environment. Ability to ensure complex new processes are implemented across agencies.

Role Competencies

Type	Description
Knowledge & Experience	Significant knowledge, experience and understanding of the main current developments and statutory position relating to children with special educational needs
	Thorough knowledge of the main SEN legislation and guidance, particularly the Children and Families Act 2014, the Education Act 1996 and related regulation and guidance, including the SEND Code of Practice.
	Knowledge and experience of working within the criminal justice system
	Significant experience of case preparation within a formal legal setting.

	Significant experience of advocacy in a formal legal setting.
	Experience of the work of other agencies including health, social care and others.
	Experience of relevant work preferably in a school setting or within a local authority, or equivalent organisation.
Literacy and written language skills	Ability to draft policy reports covering the work of Tribunals and YOT, make appropriate recommendations and write detailed, grammatical letters, statements and reports in a clear and structured manner based on an analysis of complex information
	Ability to analyse complex reports, and to demonstrate good analytical skills, synthesis, and précis skills
	Ability to draft legally robust submissions for appeals
Generalising	Ability to apply learning and technical aspects from one case to another within wider legal framework
Emotional intelligence and resilience	<p>Ability to know when to and how to apply a sensitive and objective empathy without compromising the Council.</p> <p>Ability to manage situations of high stress, anxiety and sometimes anger amongst stakeholders, especially parents.</p> <p>Ability to manage effectively manage the pressures of informal and formal legal settings, including the unpredictability of what those pressures may be.</p> <p>Resilience to challenge in a legal context where high levels of challenge are part of the process.</p> <p>Calm and grounded when challenged.</p>

Behavioural Competencies

Competency	Key to role
Communicating and influencing	Effective verbal and written communication skills
	Ability to communicate complex issues in a clear and effectively manner (oral and written) with a wide range of stakeholders and to advise, persuade, influence, empathise and be assertive as appropriate.
	Ability to represent cases and generally participate effectively at tribunals, case conferences and other forums to secure positive outcomes which make best use of limited resources.
	Well-developed inter-personal skills and social communication abilities to be able to sustain a complex discussion with head teachers, parents, young people
	Proven ability to resolve conflict through mediation and other conflict resolution techniques and find creative, interagency solutions which meet children's needs.
	Ability to ensure a high standard of customer care
	Ability to manage continuous interruptions, including phone calls, ensuring courtesy and attention as required
	Ability to influence policy and decision making across agencies
Political Awareness	Appreciation of the political make-up and decision-making processes of the council and its impact on the role

Leadership	Willingness to take personal responsibility for the delivery of relevant service priorities that pertain to the role.
	Able to formulate and implement management plans
	Ability to ensure that children and young people and their parents are the focal point for decision making
	Ability to provide leadership to the agencies involved in the work with YOT cohorts to ensure the Council's responsibilities are met.
	Ability to ensure statutory criteria for efficiency and cost-effectiveness are integrated into advice that informs decisions to be made and actions taken
	Skilled in coaching and mentoring staff through modelling, working alongside and teaching – as part of an approach to secure continuing improvement in casework management and to develop higher level skills across Team members
Problem solving	Ability to analyse complex information quickly, reaching and articulating decisions with clarity, to deliver solutions that command support.
	Ability to engage those who disagree to secure agreement through explanation, clarifying, knowledge of the law and tactical case management skills
Striving for excellence	Proven record of achievement in delivering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service improvement • logical and effective decision making • high quality, accurate and timely work
	Ability to manage a complex workload and meet tight timescales, using ICT skills to support office procedures
	Demonstrates a determination to provide a quality service and achieve challenging targets
	Commitment to embrace the principles of equality in the delivery of the service
Team working	Ability to provide leadership to and work effectively, flexibly, and constructively with colleagues in a team and make a positive contribution.
	Ability to work effectively with senior managers, staff, schools, public, external partners and to establish confidence, trust, and credibility.
	Demonstrable experience of working effectively and participating with other colleagues on an inter-agency basis to ensure an effective response to complex issues
	Ability to build and nurture good working relationships with colleagues and across a wide range of outside agencies.
Safeguarding	Thorough understanding of the principles of safeguarding and a commitment to improving safeguarding the welfare children and young people.

Partnership working	<p>Recognises the importance to the council of active partnership working and embraces partnership working where relevant to deliver services most effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>Ability to design and implement efficient processes for the inter-agency work and individual interventions across Dispute resolution.</p>
	<p>Actively contributes to the creation of an open, and interdependent culture</p>
	<p>Ability to provide accurate guidance, information, and advice to parents</p>

JOB DESCRIPTION

Service:	Education & Skills
Job Title:	SEN Caseworker – Dispute Resolution , Mediations ,Tribunals
Grade:	SCP 29 - 32
Reports to:	Tribunals and Mediations Manager

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF JOB

1. To oversee, negotiate and resolve all complaints, dispute resolution, mediation and tribunal cases and to support other team members in the preparation of cases in respect of dispute resolution, mediation or tribunal.
2. To prepare and present cases on behalf of the Local Authority for Mediation purposes.
3. To work in collaboration in dispute resolution pre mediation stage and mediation stage, collectively working with parents and stakeholders to effectively resolve complaints and areas /issues of dispute and disagreement.
4. The dispute and resolution person would consider and work on cases pre-mediation stage and facilitate meetings and discussions to resolve issues. We would ideally want this person to also look at cases where Mediation has been requested to see if these can be resolved informally through meetings with the families
5. To organise and attend meetings with the intention to effectively resolve and progress cases that have areas of disagreement.
6. Provide support for tribunal and formal disagreements, which will include preparing cases for tribunal, liaising with Legal Services, SEND services and multi-agency practitioners, represent the Local Authority in a legal environment, presenting Local Authority cases at SENDT and defending the appropriateness of the proposed service provision. This will include the preparation of evidence for the Local Government Ombudsman.
7. Ensure mediation and problem resolution is an active feature at an early stage in caseworkers' engagement with families to reduce tribunal numbers.
8. Provide advice on and attend resolution meetings with parents and other practitioners in an attempt to settle disputed issues without the need for formal legal redress wherever possible. This will include responsibility for negotiating changes to EHC plans.
9. Engage with schools and other agencies to develop an awareness and understanding of best practice in relation to assessment, planning and person-centred approaches.
10. Be required to respond to all concerns raised via the SENDIST process, and through formal, and informal, mediation and disagreement resolution meetings. Develop the capacity and confidence with regards to these matters in the SEND Team and across the local area partnership.

11. Be a highly organised individual who can coordinate these matters, keep clear records, and keep all parties up to date at every stage. You will provide quantitative and qualitative reports and briefings to inform good working practice and improvements to the service.
12. To monitor, review Draft and Final EHC plans from caseworkers.
13. To work closely with the Head of Assessment and Placements and Tribunals Manager to achieve consistency in management decisions and methods. Thus, ensuring delivery of a high-quality service and the maintenance of a motivated and robust team
14. To write, maintain and amend Education, Health, and Care Plans and through contact with schools and other education providers, and consideration of annual review reports, monitor the arrangement of any special educational provision specified in the statement, in accordance with relevant legislation.
15. Liaising with schools, education settings and parents regarding assessment, placement, support and any other matter of interest or concern to schools and parents that falls within the brief of the SEN Team.
16. To display a genuine commitment to partnership working relationships with parents, pupils, schools, early years' settings, colleges, Children's Service staff and other statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that the Council's statutory duties for SEN are effectively undertaken, and that parents and providers are confident in the management of the statutory SEN process.
17. Through professional, objective, clear and discrete interactions with parents and professionals, ensure that personal presentation and style recognises that assessment and statementing, and related matters, are often stressful for parents.
18. Working within the Council's code of practice for communication with the public, take time and make appropriate phone, meeting, or written responses to build confidence and ensure the Council's statutory responsibilities are met.
19. To carry forward, proposed changes through the SEND Change Programme, reporting where needed, participating in feedback and meetings that involve dispute resolution.

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES

1. To take the lead on dispute resolution and mediations, ensuring that the SEN Assessment and Placements team fulfils its statutory duties to children and young people.
2. In accordance with the regulations and guidance that underpin assessment of SEN and multi-agency interventions, and within LBB operational procedures, ensure that all processes including issuing, amending, and reviewing EHCP's are delivered within timescales.

Relationships and contact stakeholders and partners

3. Ensure supportive constructive and sensitive liaison and discussion with schools and settings so the decisions made on casework are well supported with evidence and have maximum potential for sustainability.
4. Develop and maintain high quality relationships with internal and external agencies and partners.

Casework Management

5. To undertake all tasks associated with disagreement resolution, mediation and appeals for nominated cases.
6. Supported by SEN Support Officers, ensure that pupil files and all necessary casework records are accurate, kept up-to-date and are filed and stored securely, for those cases for which the post holder is responsible.
7. Have regard to statutory timescales and local performance standards for written correspondence and administration and ensure these are met for the area for those cases for which the post holder is responsible.
8. Ensure that the responsibility of safeguarding the welfare of children is a fundamental aspect of this job and that the principles are embedded in all procedures, practices, professional advice, and decision making. Ensure full compliance with the Pan-London protocols and Barnet safeguarding standards.

FLEXIBILITY

To deliver services effectively, a degree of flexibility is needed, and the post holder may be required to perform work not specifically referred to above. Such duties, however, will fall within the scope of the post, at the appropriate grade.

BELS COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

To deliver the commitment to equality of opportunity both in the provision of services and as an employer. All staff are expected to promote equality in the workplace and in the services the council delivers.

Closing date for applications: 02/06/2024
Interviews will be held on: 10/06/2024.

Completing Application Forms

To apply for this post, you must complete an online **application form** available within the job posting under [Recruitment | Barnet Education & Learning Service | London \(bels.org.uk\)](#) .

Particular attention should be given to the Supporting Information section within the application form. Shortlisting is based on the candidate's ability to meet the selection criteria within the person specification. Therefore, it is essential that you outline clear examples and evidence of how you meet the requirements of the person specification. Examples and evidence should also relate back to the duties/accountabilities contained in the job description.

Reply Details

Your application form must reach us by the closing date. Applications received after this date will not be considered.

Please note CVs will not be accepted.

Further Information

Should you have any queries relating to any aspect of this appointment process, or require additional information, then contact the schools HR Team.

It is important that you complete ALL sections of the application form.

Next Steps

If you are selected for interview, we will contact you by email and/or text message.