**Educational Advocacy Officer**

**Job Title**: Educational Advocacy Officer

**Reports To**: Manager - Advocacy & Well-Being Services

**Location**: Blatchington Court Trust, 6a, Hove Park Villas, BN3 6HW

**Job Purpose**:  
This role is crucial for ensuring that children with vision impairments receive the tailored educational support they need to thrive. The Educational Advocacy Officer will be a compassionate, knowledgeable, and dedicated advocate for families navigating the SEND system, including supporting them during First Tier SEND Tribunals.

**Job Description**

**Key Responsibilities:**

**1. Advocacy and Support for Families:**

* Advocate for children and young people with vision impairments to ensure access to appropriate educational support and resources in mainstream and specialist schools and colleges.
* Provide families with guidance on their rights under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015, helping them understand the processes and services available.
* Assist parents and carers in understanding their child’s Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) ensuring it accurately reflects the child's needs.
* Be a single point of regular and consistent contact for the child or young person and their parents/carers supporting them at multi-agency meetings.
* Support all aspects of an EHCP; Annual Reviews, Phase Transfers and day to day problem solving.
* Provide information and signposting where necessary.
* Provide emotional and practical support as required as part of a trusting relationship; and
* Empower the child/young person and their families to make decisions and where appropriate to make effective use of a personal budget.

**2. SEND Tribunal Support:**

* Provide practical and emotional support to families involved in First Tier SEND Tribunals, offering guidance on how to present their case effectively.
* Ensure high quality preparation and follow up of client cases for SEN Tribunals and ensure that any directions/actions are completed within the time frames set.
* Collate evidence, ensuring all necessary documentation is complete and submitted in a timely manner.
* Attend tribunal hearings to offer advocacy and representation where appropriate, and assisting with post-tribunal follow-up.

**3. Partnership Working:**

* Liaise with schools, local authorities, and other stakeholders in a respectful, transparent and effective manner to ensure coordinated support for children with vision impairments.
* Work closely with medical professionals, vision impairment specialists, and social workers to ensure comprehensive support is provided for the child's educational and personal development needs.
* Build strong relationships with local and national vision impairment organisations to promote collaboration and share best practices, such as the Educational Advocacy Forum.

**4. Case Management:**

* Manage a caseload of approximately 20 clients, ensuring regular communication and timely interventions.
* Using our case management system, to maintain accurate records of casework, including meetings, correspondence, and tribunal outcomes, adhering to data protection and confidentiality policies.
* Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy interventions, adjusting strategies as needed to ensure the best outcomes for clients and to both manage performance and inform business intelligence.
* Where outcomes are not achieved, follow up with relevant services where further support and intervention is required.
* Ensure all transitions between education and life phases are managed effectively and seamlessly within statutory deadlines.

**5. Training and Awareness Raising:**

* Deliver training and workshops on the rights of children with vision impairments and how to navigate the SEND system effectively.

**6. Policy and Research:**

* Stay informed on changes in legislation and policy affecting SEND and vision impairments, sharing updates with families and colleagues as needed.
* Contribute to policy consultations and research initiatives that aim to improve services for children with vision impairments.

**7. Other**

* To assist beyond the remit of your individual role, whenever requested to do so, to meet charity objectives to deliver the best service to our clients.

***Person Specification***

**Essential:**

A good knowledge of the Children & Families Act (2014); SEN Code of Practice 2015 and the tribunal process; Education Act 1996 and any subsequent revisions or new legislation is essential

Successful casework management experience within a SEND, education or other related Local Authority service is essential

Ability to be articulate, succinct and to understand essential detail from a large volume of information

Good interpersonal skills with the ability to support and empower families through complex legal and educational processes.

Strong organisational skills with the ability to manage competing demands and meet deadlines within timescales

Empathy, patience, and the ability to provide emotional support to families in stressful situations.

Excellent communication skills with the ability to provide clear, concise and effective written and verbal communication.

Negotiation and conflict resolution skills.

Sound judgement and analytical skills leading to effective service delivery

The ability to gather, understand and use data to make informed and effective decisions in relevant service areas

Experience of, or the ability to gain skills in developing and delivering training to parents, carers and partner agencies.

**Desirable:**

An understanding of the changing national agenda for schools and an ability to interpret the impact of this on casework

A good understanding of Preparation for Adulthood and Post 16 pathways.

Experience working with children who have vision impairments, and/or with vision impairment specialists and other multi-disciplinary teams.

Experience of representing or supporting families at SEND tribunals or similar legal settings.

**Qualifications:**

Degree or equivalent experience is essential

Training in advocacy, SEND law, or vision impairment is highly desirable.

**Working Hours**:

Minimum of 28 or maximum of 35 hours per week.

Office based

Occasional flexibility required to attend tribunal hearings or evening meetings.

**Salary**: £35,000 per annum FTE.Top of Form

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