

Senior People & Culture Adviser

Job Description

Post title	Senior People & Culture Adviser
Reports to	People & Culture Lead
Location of the post	Trust central office with travel to schools as required
Grade of post	9

Purpose of the Role

To support the People & Culture Lead in providing a proactive, professional and solutions-focused People & Culture service across the Trust. The Senior People & Culture Adviser partners with leaders by providing high-quality advice, guidance and practical support on people matters, progresses allocated employee relations casework, supports organisational change activity, and contributes to initiatives that strengthen culture, wellbeing and people initiatives across the Trust.

The postholder provides confident, expert advice to leaders through people processes, and plays a key role in the continuous improvement of People & Culture systems, policies and practices.

Main Duties & Responsibilities

People Partnering & Leadership Support

- Provide high-quality, professional people management advice and guidance to Headteachers, senior leaders and managers across the Trust.
- Partner with managers to apply People & Culture policies, procedures and initiatives consistently and confidently.
- Build strong working relationships to understand school-level workforce needs and priorities.
- Deliver, support and evaluate training, workshops and briefings to ensure leaders have the knowledge, skills and understanding to apply people policies and procedures across the Trust.

Employee Relations & Case Management

- Manage a broad range of employee relations cases (e.g. conduct, capability, grievance, absence, flexible working) including more complex or sensitive matters, seeking support only for high-risk issues.
- Ensure people matters are handled promptly, professionally and in line with policy and legislation.
- Attend and provide procedural advisory support during formal hearings, advising panels where appropriate.
- Support the preparation of documentation for ER meetings, including letters, packs and investigation materials.

- Draft or support the drafting of ER correspondence including letters, invitations, investigation summaries and restructure documentation.
- Provide well-reasoned advice on policies, legislation and terms & conditions and highlight risks or issues to the People & Culture Lead where appropriate.

Organisational Change & Restructures

- Lead allocated elements of organisational change processes, including restructures, job redesign, workforce modelling, consultation planning and TUPE activity.
- Prepare supporting documentation and provide direct advice to managers and employees during the consultation process, ensuring statutory compliance.

People Data, HR Systems & Reporting

- Analyse People & Culture data (absence, turnover, ER case patterns, recruitment activity, staff survey insights) to identify trends, risks and opportunities, and provide recommendations to the People & Culture Lead.
- Support the effective use and maintenance of the People & Culture Information System or other systems that hold HR records, ensuring data accuracy and integrity.
- Prepare reports with narrative analysis for senior leaders, Trust boards, committees, external partners or auditors.

People Policy, Governance & Best Practice

- Lead the review and development of allocated People & Culture policies and guidance.
- Maintain effective relationships with Trade Union representatives, Occupational Health and other external agencies.
- Identify opportunities for improvement and implement agreed changes to People & Culture processes, systems and practices.
- Assist with implementing Trust-wide initiatives aligned with Trust priorities and the People & Culture strategy.

Collaboration & Team Contribution

- Represent the People & Culture team at meetings where appropriate.
- Provide informal mentoring and professional guidance to junior colleagues, supporting their development.
- Act as a senior point of contact within the team for People & Culture queries.
- Maintain the highest standards of confidentiality, professionalism and integrity.
- Undertake any other duties required to support the effective operation of the Trust.

Responsibility

For Employees: No direct line management, but may provide guidance, support and informal mentoring to junior colleagues.

For Customers/Clients: Provide accurate, timely and professional People & Culture advice to leaders, managers and employees across the Trust.

For Budgets: None

For Physical Resources: Ensure confidential records and HR files are stored securely and managed in line with GDPR and data-retention requirements.

Contacts and Working Relationships

Within Service Area/Section: Headteachers, Office Managers and other managers and employees across schools and central Trust functions.

With Other HCAT/Council Areas: Liaison with Local Authority colleagues on people-related processes.

External Bodies: Trade Union representatives, Occupational Health, providers of other services as required (employee assistance programme, training providers, pension schemes, local government bodies, People & Culture System etc.)

Working Conditions and Demands

Physical Risks: Not applicable.

Working Conditions: Low-risk environment. The post-holder may occasionally need to deal with stakeholders who are upset or angry.

Emotional Demands: Some exposure to emotionally demanding situations due to the nature of employee relations casework.

Person Specification

CRITERIA	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
QUALIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum CIPD Level 5 or equivalent HR/Employment Law qualification with substantial post-qualification experience. Strong understanding of employment legislation and People & Culture/HR best practice. Evidence of ongoing CPD in areas such as employee relations, organisational change, employment law or HR systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIPD Level 7 (or equivalent) strongly preferred. Training in mediation, coaching, organisational development. 	AF / I / C / R
EXPERIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant experience managing a broad range of employee relations cases including more complex or sensitive matters independently. Experience providing authoritative advice to senior leaders and managers, exercising sound professional judgement. Experience leading allocated elements of organisational change such as restructures, job redesign or consultation processes. Experience designing and delivering training or briefing managers on policies and procedures to develop manager capability. Experience analysing people data to identify trends, risks and improvement opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience advising in education / MATs / multi-site or unionised environment. Experience acting as a lead for a specialist area such as wellbeing, culture, EDI programmes, policy development, HR systems. 	AF / I / R
KNOWLEDGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth knowledge of employment legislation and its practical application to casework and organisational change. Strong understanding of consultation requirements, statutory processes and best practice in restructures and workforce change. Detailed knowledge of HR policy application and the ability to interpret risk, providing well-reasoned recommendations. Understanding of HR systems, data integrity and people analytics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of National and Local Conditions of Service and their application in a school or MAT context. Understanding of job evaluation and grading frameworks. 	AF / I / T R

SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly developed communication, influencing and negotiation skills, with the ability to challenge constructively and gain buy-in from senior leaders. • Strong analytical and evaluative skills, with the ability to interpret complex information and provide clear, evidence-based recommendations. • Ability to manage competing priorities independently, making informed decisions in time-sensitive or ambiguous situations. • High level of accuracy and attention to detail in drafting complex correspondence, reports and consultation documentation. • Ability to design and deliver effective training and development sessions for managers. 	I / T / R
PERSONAL QUALITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident, professional and able to exercise sound judgement in sensitive or complex situations. • Able to work autonomously, taking ownership of allocated areas while contributing positively to the wider team. • Demonstrate emotional intelligence, resilience and the ability to navigate challenging conversations with professionalism. • Committed to continuous improvement and able to identify opportunities to enhance People & Culture processes and practices. 	I / R
OTHER REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to travel across Trust schools and work flexibly to meet organisational needs. • Full driving licence and own transport. • Commitment to maintaining up-to-date knowledge of employment law, HR best practice and developments in the education sector. 	AF / I

*Key: AF=application form; I=interview; T=test; P=presentation; R=references; C=certification

Safeguarding Statement

HCAT are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils and young people. We have a robust Child Protection Policy, and all staff will receive training relevant to their role at induction and throughout their employment at the school. We expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 so is subject to a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service criminal records check for work with children.

HCAT provide front line services, which recognise the need to respond flexibly to changing demands and circumstances. Whilst this job outline provides a summary of the post, this may need to be adapted or adjusted to meet changing circumstances. Such changes would be commensurate with the grading of the post and would be subject to consultation. All staff are required to comply with HCAT Policies and Procedures.

HCAT requires a commitment to equity of access and outcomes, this will include due regard to equality, diversity, dignity, respect and human rights and working with others to keep vulnerable people safe from abuse and mistreatment.

HCAT requires that staff offer the best level of service to their customers and behave in a way that gives them confidence. Customers will be treated as individuals, with respect for their diversity, culture and values.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation places responsibilities for health and safety on the school, as your employer and you as an employee. In addition to the schools' overall duties, the post holder has personal responsibility for their own health and safety and that of other employees; additional and more specific responsibilities are identified in the school's Health and Safety policy.