

## HEAD OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

### JOB DESCRIPTION & SPECIFICATION

**Autism Early Support Trust** is recruiting a Head of Children's Services, a new position designed to drive forward all facets of the support we provide to children and their families.

#### Who We Are

- **Autism Early Support (AES)**, established in 2001 as Puzzle Centre, is a UK charity based near Winslow, Buckinghamshire.
- We have a growing national reputation as a leader in the development of 'best practice' in early years education and intervention for young children with autism and other communication difficulties.
- AES operates a specialist nursery, **Circle Centre**, which has repeatedly been rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.
- Full details of the work of the AES can be found at: [www.autismearlysupport.org.uk](http://www.autismearlysupport.org.uk)

#### The Role

The Head of Children's Services, reporting to the CEO, will be responsible for all of AES' activities which provide support for children with autism and other communication difficulties and their families. This new role brings together management of the **Circle Centre** specialist nursery, with spearheading the **Outreach** operations.

The **Circle Centre** specialist nursery provides highly specialised education, therapy and support for small groups of children, in a environment which is adapted to meet the individual needs of children on the autism spectrum or with other communication needs.

The **Outreach** service supports families and children, aged 2 – 12, who either do not attend our nursery in Buckinghamshire or who attend the nursery and want additional support at home or in their school. Our expert team of specialist teachers and therapists visit families in their homes, assess their child's educational needs, provide advice and guidance, and offer targeted support. Through Outreach, AES also provides courses, conferences, educational open mornings and bespoke consultancy for individual practitioners, organisations, schools or nurseries, as well as tribunal cases.

We wish to appoint an experienced and energetic practitioner to manage and lead both Circle Centre and the Outreach team, and to oversee the day-to-day running of both services. We are looking for a skilled practitioner who has both solid management experience and a good understanding of the vital part that specialised early intervention plays in increasing positive outcomes and life chances for this vulnerable group of children and their families. It would also be ideal if you have experience of delivering training courses to practitioners about early years autism good practice.

In return, we can offer you an unique opportunity to develop your skills as the lead manager of this service - using your expertise in the education of very young children with communication and autism spectrum disorders at this crucial time of their lives. We wish to appoint a teacher or speech and language therapist (or other experienced practitioner with similar expertise) with the vision to play an important part in taking Autism Early Support forward in its development as an organisation.

The Head of Children's Services must ensure that the long term outcomes for our children, families and practitioners are achieved:

- ✓ Children receiving our service will be able to communicate their needs/express themselves. This could be through speech, sign language or symbol use. These communication methods will be established within Circle Centre or via Outreach at home or school and the child and parents and other practitioners will have the confidence to use them.
- ✓ Parents will have a much clearer picture of their own child's particular differences or learning difficulty and have a good understanding of how they can communicate with their child. They will be better able to meet the needs of their child and will be clearer about their own child's educational needs.
- ✓ Practitioners will understand how to meet the needs of young children with autism and communication difficulties.

This post will report to: **CEO**

Responsible for: **Circle Centre nursery staff, Outreach team**

#### **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- To manage the operations of Circle Centre and the Outreach services.
- Together with the CEO, to develop and implement a strategic plan to extend the reach of the Outreach service.
- To recruit and manage, together with other senior team members, the staff who work for Circle Centre and the Outreach service and to carry out, at least annually, staff development review meetings.
- To organise regular staff training for the Outreach and nursery staff teams.
- To update, as required, together with the CEO and COO, all policies and procedures in relation to the operations of the services.
- To discuss each application to Circle Centre and Outreach with the senior teams.
- To oversee the assessment, observation and record keeping procedures, in consultation with the Lead Specialist Teacher and the Outreach team.
- To ensure that Circle Centre maintains its Outstanding rating from OFSTED.
- To ensure that the Outreach services maintain high standards of delivery and to incorporate parental and practitioner feedback from evaluations to refine and improve the services.

- To use the SCERTS model of assessment and planning to meet the needs of our children, their families and others who may be working with the child.
- To be confident in using and delivering training on the Circle Centre approach and the SCERTS model– spending regular times working or observing in the nursery to maintain and develop your skills.
- To deliver face-to-face and online training on autism education and support.
- To assist the CEO in the design and delivery of occasional national conferences or seminars.
- To maintain and develop the record keeping and data base about AES children and families.
- To use and develop expertise in delivering the SCERTS model ([www.scerts.com](http://www.scerts.com)) together with other key members of the staff team.
- To attend relevant courses and conferences and keep abreast of research and developments in this area of work.
- To carry out home visits or consultations for children attending Circle Centre each term, in conjunction with the Occupational and Speech and Language Therapists.
- To visit other preschools/nurseries, who share a child with Circle Centre, to provide ongoing guidance and support to Early Years professionals
- To organise and chair six monthly multi-disciplinary review of Statement meetings about individual children attending Circle Centre and to write reports for these review meetings.
- To develop and maintain close links with local authority SEN and early years teams from different areas in which children attending Circle Centre live and to ensure that Circle Centre is working with other providers and funders.
- To work with team members to plan for and arrange nursery induction, parent support and training events for parents and families of both Circle Centre and Outreach children.
- To take on the responsibility of Designated Safeguarding Lead on behalf of both Circle Centre and the Outreach services.

#### **PERSON SPECIFICATION:**

##### ***Skills and abilities:***

- Qualified teacher, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist or other relevant practitioner (such as psychologist), with a minimum of 5 years experience in working with young children with communication and learning difficulties.
- Specific experience and qualifications in the education of children on the autistic spectrum.
- Training in the use of the SCERTS model.
- Ability to work closely with parents.

##### ***Experience:***

- Delivering the Foundation Stage Curriculum.
- Managing a service.
- Working closely with parents.
- Working with children and parents in their own homes.
- Working collaboratively and constructively as part of a team and leading that team.
- Offering a holistic approach to meeting children's special needs and specifically understanding a range of approaches to teaching children on the autistic spectrum.
- Employing interactive methods of facilitating language and communication development.
- Utilising structured teaching approaches.

- Using the SCERTS model.
- Working in a multidisciplinary team.
- Managing challenging behaviours.

**Knowledge:**

- In-depth knowledge of autism and communication difficulties and the range of educational interventions used to teach children facing these challenges.
- In-depth knowledge of early child development.
- Understanding of the use of a visually structured environment to facilitate learning in children with complex communication difficulties.
- Knowledge of SEN Code of Practice, including the Annual Review process and EHC Plans.
- Knowledge of training techniques for adults.

This job description is not a definitive list of responsibilities but identifies the key components of the role. The post holder will, therefore, be required to undertake any other reasonable duties commensurate with the level of responsibility/salary of this post.

Overall, this person must want to be part of a team whose members work closely together, and really want to achieve the charity's mission. The ideal candidate must show a drive and determination to succeed in developing and driving forward a new service, as well as maintaining high standards in our well-established specialist nursery (Circle Centre). We welcome applications from anyone wanting to join and contribute their expertise to a strong and friendly team.

**Salary will be dependent on qualifications and experience.**

**The position is full-time.**

*Autism Early Support Trust Limited is committed both to equality of opportunity and to ensuring the safeguarding of our children and employees. These values are paramount to our ethos of working and are reflected in the policies of our charity.*