

Candidate Information Booklet

[Ref: HoLS&A/06/24]

HEAD OF LEARNING SUPPORT & ASSESSMENT

**Middletown Centre for Autism
(Permanent Full Time)**



Extended Closing Date:

Completed Application Forms must be received by

12.00 noon on Monday 22nd July 2024

Contents of the Pack

Prior to completing the application form applicants should familiarise themselves with the contents of the information pack. The pack includes:

- [Section 1 – Important Information](#)
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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

HEAD OF LEARNING SUPPORT & ASSESSMENT

Thank you for your interest in this important executive post of Head of Learning Support & Assessment at Middletown Centre for Autism.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS TIMETABLE

Following eligibility sift, the selection process will be based on a competency-based interview.

Key timetable

The indicative timeline is as follows:

Advert close date	Monday 22nd July 2024 at 12:00noon
Panel Shortlisting	Tuesday 30th July 2024
Interviews	Monday 12th August 2024
Location	Middletown Centre for Autism

We reserve the right to add additional stages to the process.

Applicants are advised that they must be available to attend on the above dates for interview if successfully shortlisted. No other dates are planned to be scheduled. However, please note that the panel reserve the right to alter or amend the timetable due to applicant numbers or unforeseen circumstances.

Please note applications received after the stipulated close date and time will not be considered.

Communication with Applicants

All communications, so far as possible, will be issued electronically. You should therefore check your email account to make sure that you do not miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

Please note all communication in respect of this position will come from and should be directed to our third-party consultancy, Allen People Solutions, who have been appointed to manage this vacancy on our behalf - applications@allenpeoplesolutions.co.uk. Please contact them directly if you have any queries.

Reasonable Adjustments

Any candidates who require reasonable adjustments to any aspect of the selection procedure, including assistance completing their application form because of a disability, or who require the Candidate Information Pack and Application form in an alternate format, should contact Allen People Solutions via email on applications@allenpeoplesolutions.co.uk.

Candidates who wish to receive an Application Forms and information pack in accessible formats are requested to advise the appointed Consultancy of their requirements as promptly as possible allowing for the fact that the closing date for receipt remains the same for all applicants.

About Middletown Centre for Autism

Middletown Centre for Autism, located in County Armagh, is a cross border organisation jointly funded by the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) and the Department of Education (Ireland).

The purpose of the Centre is to support the promotion of excellence in the development and coordination of education services to autistic children and young people across the island of Ireland. Although it is not a statutory North/ South implementation body, the Middletown Centre is under the purview of The North South Ministerial Council.

The Centre was established in March 2007 under the Companies (NI) Orders 1986 to 1990 as a Company limited by guarantee. In 2012 it was classified by the then Department of Finance and Personnel as a non-departmental public body (NDPD) analogous to a non-commercial semi-state body in Ireland.

The Centre develops innovative evidence-based approaches to the provision of services for autistic children and young people and provides expert, research-based guidance and advice to policymakers and education providers in both jurisdictions.

The Centre is recognised as a leading source of advice to policy makers in both Departments of Education on the island of Ireland. It has acquired an international reputation as a respected innovator with a unique depth and breadth of expertise in the field of autism.

LEARNING SUPPORT AND ASSESSMENT DIVISION

The Learning Support and Assessment Division supports service providers in transdisciplinary assessment, planning and provision of suitable education for autistic children and young people.

They lead a specialist and multi-disciplinary team including Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech and Language Therapy, Music Therapy, Training, Specialist Teachers, Autism Intervention Specialists, Classroom Assistants and Assistants.

Under the leadership of the Chief Executive, the function collaborates with the Research and Development Team in developing fully the operational capacity of Middletown Centre for Autism to support the promotion of excellence throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland in the education of autistic children and young people.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Head of Learning Support & Assessment

Reporting to: Chief Executive

Location: Middletown Centre for Autism, Co Armagh

Job Purpose: The Head of Learning Support and Assessment will form, develop and lead a professional team in supporting service providers in transdisciplinary assessment, planning and provision of suitable education for autistic children and young people.

Under the leadership of the Chief Executive, they will collaborate with the Head of Research and Development Team in developing fully the operational capacity of Middletown Centre for Autism to support the promotion of excellence throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland in the education of autistic children and young people.

This post will provide an opportunity for the successful candidate to develop a high level of expertise in the development of assessment, intervention and training methodologies both internal and external to the Centre.

Key Areas of Responsibility:

1. Strategic Thinking and Planning

- To work as an integral part of the Senior Management Team to create a corporate plan, incorporate the vision and values for the Centre and to implement and report on the Centre's strategic plan, aims and objectives.
- To oversee the development and provision of the learning support and assessment service for enhancing collaborative partnerships with local service providers.
- To ensure service delivery is quality assured, evaluated, audited and changes are implemented where necessary to achieve maximum quality and cost effectiveness.
- To contribute to the development of an annual written report for presentation to the Chief Executive.
- To identify key strategic direction, and strengths for the Division and to devise appropriate approaches and actions to build on the strengths and meet these challenges.

2. Managing Services

- To direct the work of the Learning Support and Assessment Team and regularly update the Chief Executive regarding the achievement of processes and outcomes.
- To ensure that structures, procedures and protocols are in place to support the development of best practice and provide ongoing evidence of progress.
- To create an annual business plan for the Learning Support and Assessment Division and to be accountable for the delivery of the divisional objectives.
- To ensure that proper monitoring and analysis of performance takes place at divisional and operational level.
- To develop organisational protocols and controls for service delivery and for ensuring the health, safety and well-being of children and young people under the care of the Learning Support and Assessment Division.
- To develop the ICT-based services for the LS&A team to enhance the delivery of the service throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland

3. Managing People

- To lead, motivate and manage the Divisional staff to achieve the Centre's aims and objectives.
- To set and monitor individual standards, targets and activities.
- To collaborate with the Research and Development Services in identifying the training needs of staff through assessment and performance review.
- To implement a corporate performance management process that encompasses all disciplines within the Learning Support and Assessment Division.
- To develop a climate and culture of continuous learning and improvement to achieve excellence in service delivery.

4. Managing Resources

- To ensure resources are available to achieve the aims and objectives of the Division.
- To manage and develop the resources needed to support service delivery.

- To prepare and monitor expenditure budgets for the LS&A Division and Centre as a corporate body, in co-operation with the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Management team.
- To be accountable to the Chief Executive Officer for capital, revenue budgets and expenditure levels within the Department.

5. Problem Solving

- To collate, analyse and disseminate data.
- To develop networks and sound working relationships that encourage staff and others to contribute their knowledge and expertise to inform decisions regarding service provision.
- To decide how best service provision should be provided to the children and young people, those with parental responsibility, to educational and social service professionals.
- To foster positive working relationships with autism specific first tier services support groups.

6. Communication

- To actively listen to and show awareness and understanding of the relevant issues and sensitivities in face to face/online communication with service users and staff so that the work of the Centre is targeted appropriately.
- To develop and enhance working relationships with the various stakeholders and users.
- To represent the Centre and LS&A Team at external meetings as appropriate.
- To act as an ambassador for the Centre and promote the organisation in a way that is consistent with its ethos and strategy.
- To develop literature and materials describing the services provided by the LS&A Team.

7. Professional and Technical Skills

- Along with the Research and Development Team to maintain, update and advance the Centre's knowledge and expertise in relation to issues and developments in educational services and policy with regard to autism.
- To promote the use of IT in the enhancement of the delivery of the LS&A Team
- To ensure services are developed in response to current and future needs of the service-users and in light of the results of the findings of research at the Centre, nationally and internationally.
- To work with the Chief Executive Officer to promote the standing of the Centre within the Autistic community and professionals, at a local, national and international level.
- To have proficient knowledge in autism so as to present evidence based rationale that the operational approach of the Centre is appropriate.
- To contribute to developing the Centre to be recognised as a centre of excellence nationally and internationally.

NB The above is given as a broad range of duties and responsibilities and is not intended as a complete description of all tasks. The post holder may be required to undertake various other duties as deemed necessary and commensurate with the level of responsibility of the post. This Job Description may be subject to change in line with organisational needs.

General Principals

- The post holder shall, at all times, uphold and comply with the Centre's policy on the Protection of Children and Young People in an Educational Setting.
- The post holder shall, at all times, uphold and comply with the Centre's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Maintain knowledge, skills and expertise through engagement in a range of continuous professional development activities.

PERSON SPECIFICATION:

Essential Eligibility Criteria: Head of Learning Support and Assessment

Applicants **must** be able to demonstrate the following, by the closing date:

1. A teaching or allied health professional degree or third level equivalent qualification
2. Proven experience (breadth and depth) in the assessment and overseeing of educational programmes for autistic children and young people
3. At least 3 years senior management* experience of successfully leading, managing and delivering complex programmes of work or projects against demanding deadlines in a large and complex organisation**
4. Professional experience and competency in the area of autism in a professional context
5. Access to a form of transport that will permit them to meet the requirements of the post

The following additional clarification is provided:

- * Senior management is defined as a manager who reports to the Chief Executive, Board or a Director.
- ** Large and complex is defined as an organisation with professional and technical disciplines, having a customer base with diverse requirements and a budget of at least £2m within the public, private or voluntary sector organisation.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

Desirable Criteria:

1. A professional qualification related to children and young people with special educational needs/autism OR
2. Professional / academic skills in the quality assurance and evaluation of educational programmes OR
3. Relevant experience in leading and managing a multi-disciplinary team.

Essential Competencies:

Applicants **must** be able to demonstrate that they meet the following competencies which will be explored at interview:

1. Strategic Thinking and Planning

- A strong capacity for strategic thinking and an ability to plan and organise work to achieve results within tight deadlines, focusing on priorities and objectives with a clear sense of direction
- Experience of developing culture of learning and service improvement, best practice approaches and evaluation mechanisms to enhance delivery

2. Managing Services

- Demonstrated experience of achieving outcomes in line with divisional objectives
- Experience of ensuring appropriate protocols and controls are in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children and young people under the care of the Learning Support and Assessment Division

3. Managing People

- Demonstrate effective leadership, change management and team-working skills and the ability to proactively manage the performance and development of others to achieve the objectives of the organisation
- Demonstrated experience of influencing and working with others both internally and externally to achieve corporate management objectives

4. Managing Resources

- Demonstrated ability to effectively plan, prioritise and manage a range of resources and work priorities to deliver objectives, meet stakeholder requirements and manage risk
- Experience of managing functional budgets

5. Managing Information and Problem Solving

- Demonstrated ability to evaluate, interpret and present complex management and financial information, and make critical decisions
- Ability to negotiate and influence key contacts internally and externally to gain the commitment of others

6. Communication

- Demonstrated experience of establishing and developing effective relationships with a diverse range of internal and external key stakeholders and third parties
- Demonstrated ability to communicate confidently, clearly and persuasively, both orally and in writing, to a wide audience, with experience of making presentations at Board level displaying sensitivity, tact and diplomacy.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT

Salary: £66,767 - £69,914, Scale SCP points 58-61 of the NJC Salary Scale.
(Equivalent to approximately €76,118 - €79,816 per annum)

Consideration may be given to starting at a higher point on the salary scale for applicants with additional relevant experience and/or qualifications. The relevance and extent of the additional experience will be determined by MCA at the time of offer of appointment.

Location: Middletown Centre for Autism Headquarters, 35 Church St, Middletown, Armagh BT60 4HZ.

The post holder will mainly be required to travel throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland with the possibility of travelling to GB and Internationally.

Hybrid Working: MCA is currently finalising its hybrid working policy which will provide staff with the opportunity to work on a hybrid basis for those posts where it is appropriate to do so and as agreed.

Working Hours: The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours.

However, the post holder may be required to work additional hours (outside normal office hours) from time to time and remain flexible and mobile as is reasonably necessary for the efficient performance of the duties.

Annual Leave: 30 days per annum (pro-rata), rising to 33 days after 5 years continuous service, plus public and privilege holidays

Pension: MCA offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details of this can be found at the following link: <https://nilgosc.org.uk>

Post Status: Permanent

Probation Confirmation of appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 6 months. If performance, conduct or attendance is not satisfactory the probationary period may be extended or the appointment may be terminated at any time during this period. An appointee will be expected to demonstrate a track record of effective service within this period.

Reserve List: There is currently one full-time permanent position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further vacancies which may arise.

Pre-employment checks

Any offer of appointment will be subject to a number of satisfactory pre-employment checks including satisfactory references, provision of documentary evidence of qualifications as listed in the essential and/or desirable criteria.

The successful applicant will also be required to be cleared to Standard level.

Referees

Applicants are required to identify two referees, one of which should be your current employer (if applicable). Referees will be approached after an offer of employment has been made. You should not seek as a referee anyone who is related to you or for internal candidates, is a member of the recruitment and selection panel.

The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003 (POCVA)

The post for which you are applying is governed by The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. Before appointing anyone to such a post, it is imperative for the relevant check to be carried out by Access NI or the Garda Vetting Office, as appropriate. This check is to make sure those individuals who might be a risk to children and/or vulnerable adults are not appointed.

The check will indicate if you have a criminal record or if your name is included on the DHSSPS Disqualification from Working with Children List or included on the DE List and/or the DHSSPS Disqualified from Working with Vulnerable Adults List. Any information received will be treated confidentially and will be discussed with candidates before a final decision is reached. After the decision is made the information will be destroyed.

Secondment

This post may be filled by secondment of the successful candidate from his/her current employer. "Secondment" means a voluntary transfer from a permanent employer for a fixed period which does not sever the employment relationship of the person seconded with the permanent employer.

The duration will be agreed by all parties prior to the start of any secondment. A secondment would be on a candidate's current terms and conditions of service.

It is advisable that candidates interested in a secondment option make their employers aware that, under NICS secondment arrangements, the successful candidate will remain an employee of their current employer. The necessary administration arrangements will be agreed with the Department and the employer before a secondment arrangement commences.

Public Service

All public officeholders have a duty in relation to conduct, propriety and confidentiality. The Nolan Principles apply to anyone who works as a public officeholder: **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.**

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Privacy Statement

Middletown Centre for Autism is committed to protecting the privacy of all our applicants and upholding high standards in terms of information security and transparency. Your information is held securely by us and we have taken all reasonable steps, and have in place appropriate security measures, to protect your information. Your information is not transferred outside the European Economic Area.

When you apply for a job with us (whether you are an internal candidate or not), you will be asked to provide personal information to support your application and to enable us to determine your eligibility and suitability to work with Middletown Centre for Autism. This will include the personal information we need to enable us to select the right candidate for the role, and may include things such as past employment details, educational qualifications and skills. If you are successful in the employment process, any personal information provided to us may then form part of your HR record which we would hold.

Equality of Opportunity

Middletown Centre for Autism is committed to equality of opportunity and all applications for employment will be considered on the basis of merit. Middletown Centre for Autism welcomes applications from all suitably qualified candidates irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

In accordance with Fair Employment regulations, you are required to complete a monitoring form. This information is used to assist us in completing annual FEC returns and access to this information is strictly limited.

Equality monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information that is relevant to and necessary for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between different categories of persons. This section sets out what information is collected, the reasons for doing so and what it is used for.

You should note that the Monitoring Form is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return it will result in disqualification. The Monitoring Form will be processed separately and neither the form nor the details contained in it will be available to those considering your application.

Submission of Completed Application Forms

Completed application forms must be submitted by the date and time advised at the front of this pack and to the email address as advised or otherwise submitted by post or hand delivered to Allen People Solutions, 1b Ladas Drive, Belfast BT6 9FQ.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications by email wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or received via email. Applications must bear the correct amount of postage as any shortfall may lead to a delay in delivery and the closing date may be missed.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the completed form is received by the closing date. Late applications will not be accepted.

Supplementary material such as CVs will not be considered by the Selection Panel.

CVs, letters or any other supplementary material will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms.

Application Form Guidance

Applicants are reminded that the Application Form must be fully completed. Incomplete application forms will not be considered. Additional information received after the closing date will not be considered. Faxed applications will not be accepted.

Applicants should take care to indicate on their application form how and to what extent their qualifications, skills and experience met the selection criteria outlined.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or if handwritten in legible block capitals using black ink.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write "I" statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget etc
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria.
- Do not use acronyms or complex technical detail. Write for the reader who may not know your job or organisation.

The Selection Process

1. Initial Screening: All applications received by the closing date will initially be screened by our appointed external consultancy, Allen People Solutions to check they have been completed properly. Any applications which have not been completed properly will be deemed invalid.

2. Shortlisting: The selection panel will meet to review the completed application forms in relation to the essential criteria. Only those applicants who fully and clearly demonstrate on their application form how they meet each of the essential criteria will be shortlisted. The selection panel reserves the right to apply the desirable criteria in the order specified to reduce the pool of candidates to a manageable number for interview stage and interview only those candidates that it believes best meet the selection criteria.

4. Interview: Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a panel interview to explore the competencies as set out. Please note that it is our policy that all candidates invited to attend for interview bring photographic identification – passport or driving licence to confirm identity.

An Introduction to a Competency Based Selection Process

The Competency Based Interview process is designed to help you to present relevant evidence to enable the decision makers to evaluate 'fit' against the requirements of a particular role. Relevant evidence is usually, but not exclusively, drawn from your work experience and the way in which you have accomplished a range of activities or projects.

The information you provide will be evaluated against the specific skills and competencies required for effective performance in the role. Make sure you give enough detail so that panel members understand what you actually did not make assumptions that they may understand you demonstrate a skill at the right level just because of your current role, length of experience or educational qualifications.

Some guidelines include:-

- **Give specific examples** - most questions will ask you to describe an example of when you have demonstrated a skill. Try to do this concisely but with enough detail so that the panel will be clear about what you actually did and how you did it. This detail might include information about timescales, the number of people involved, budgets etc.
- For example, if a question is about your approach to decision making, you need to do more than describe your current role and list important decisions you have made. You will need to describe how you reached that relevant decision.
- **Give a range of examples** – if possible, base your answers on different situations or challenges you faced rather than rely on just one experience. This helps the panel to evaluate how you tackle different challenges and not just your behaviour in a 'one off' situation. However, one example can be used to demonstrate competence in a number of areas.
- **Be concrete rather than theoretical** – a clear description of how you actually behaved in a particular situation (and why) can be more useful to the panel than a vague or general description of what you consider to be desirable attributes.