ROLE DESCRIPTION

Role title: Policy Officer – SEN and disability

Department: Policy, Research and Equality

Date: June 2025

Reports to: Senior Policy Manager - SEND and child poverty

Role purpose (why the job exists and its contribution)

To undertake work on policy issues within the Department, enabling it to carry out its work effectively to advance the Union's mission to shape the future of education.

To support the Union's policy work in relation to special educational needs, the behaviour and attendance of children and young people; alternative provision and PRUs; and the experiences of disabled students and disabled members.

To help ensure that policy work on these areas informs, supports and assists the achievement of the NEU's wider priorities, under the direction of the Senior Policy Manager.

Key responsibilities (the key areas of the role holder's work)

1. Work under the direction of and assist the Senior Policy Managers in the Department as appropriate

2. Support the team in the drafting and development of policy work in relation to SEND, behaviour and attendance and other matters within the remit of the Department, including:

    a) Preparing policy statements, briefings, commentaries and research papers and conducting survey work, including analysis and report writing;

    b) Preparing materials for use in advice, training and campaigning;

    c) Participate in cross team projects, including to offer policy input, working closely with colleagues in other relevant functions including bargaining, advice, organising, campaigns, communications

    d) Ensuring that the relevant webpages are up to date

3. Support for project management as appropriate

3. Support on policy work on SEND, behaviour and attendance, including:

a) Providing policy input and guidance in this area, including policy statements and responses as required

b) Research information and data and using members' professional experiences in workplaces in order to draft effective policies, guidance and recommendations

c) Provide policy support for other areas of policy as required such as for example the mental health and well-being of students, or school exclusions

d) Discussing priorities and areas of focus with the Senior Policy Manager who will set the strategy and parameters to support Departmental prioritisation, co-ordination and framing.

e) Develop constructive relationships with external bodies including Government, external stakeholders, such as the Special Education Consortium, NASEN, the SEND Policy Research Forum and the Council for Disabled Children.

f) Support for the Policy Manager in relation to the planning of the Disabled Members Conference, the Disabled Members Organising Forum, the SEND Organising Forum.

How the National Education Union works

These principles set out the culture and approach of the NEU.

The role holder:

- Models professionalism and integrity and acts in accordance with the NEU values.
- Supports the democratic processes.
- Promotes an organising culture across the union.
- Works collaboratively and empowers others
- Is committed to innovation, learning and continuous improvement of working practices, organisational culture and resources.
- Adopts a proactive and flexible approach.

Key relationships

These are the main working relationships that the role holder will develop.

Person(s)	Nature
Senior Policy Manager- PRE	The role holder will assist and work under the direction of the relevant Senior Policy Managers and will be line managed by one of the Senior Policy Managers for appraisal and development purposes
Policy Research and Equality (PRE)	The role holder will work collaboratively with other members of the department to ensure that NEU policy development and advice work reflects and is consistent with the Union's policy ideas around SEND, inclusion and pupil behaviour.
Senior Policy Manager	The role holder will support the relevant Senior Policy Manager in relation to the shared policy areas.
Other NEU Departments	The role holder will work collaboratively with colleagues in other relevant NEU functions and in multi-disciplinary teams.

Political engagement and campaigns team	The role holder will work collaboratively with the campaigns and the political engagement team to develop common strategies.
Elected members and Lay Officers	The role holder will support the Policy Manager to liaise with national executive members, other relevant elected members and lay officers as necessary in relation to the specific areas of the role holder's work and must provide a professional influence and manage relations diplomatically, being an ambassador for the NEU.
External bodies	Represent the NEU on occasion with external bodies including Government, and relevant forums, coalitions and campaign groups.

Demonstrable key skills, knowledge and experience

The role holder must be able to demonstrate these capabilities to fulfil the role to a satisfactory standard.

Qualifications

- Highly developed literacy and numeracy skills, commensurate with degree level;
- Policy or research experience on special educational needs and inclusion in education systems
- Understanding gained from working with, or researching, the policy context for inclusion and SEND policy;

Resource management & Planning

- Ability to plan, prioritise and manage own workload to agreed objectives
- Good project management skills;
- Ability to follow Department planning processes and understand the criteria which determine prioritisation of work
- Ability to understand agreed campaign goals and narrative when contributing policy expertise to project groups

Thinking challenge

- Policy understanding of the issues and concerns of teachers and the profession around special educational needs and inclusion; and understanding the policy issues around pupil behaviour and student mental health and well-being;
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- Recent and relevant experience in a policy or research environment including policy development and developing policy recommendations;
- Knowledge of, and ability to operate within, the NEU's political, educational and legal contexts;
- Ability to quickly assimilate and apply a working knowledge of other areas of expertise necessary for the performance of the role;
- Good analytical skills and ability to understand complex information;

- Ability to exercise judgement and make decisions within accepted parameters;
- Ability to align work with the priorities and criteria determined by manager or management plans and to recognise that Senior Policy Manager or Campaigns Manger will be responsible for prioritisation and policy framing

Communication

- Ability to write analytically and persuasively in a variety of styles for a range of audiences;
- Ability to produce clear and detailed written communications including policy advice, policy statements, briefings, research summaries, training and campaign materials and consultation responses;
- Ability to develop and maintain positive working relationships with stakeholders including activists and members;
- Good communication, including active listening and ability to relate to a range of people in a range of situations;
- Ability to support the team to promote its policy messages through the drafting of social media content and press releases;

Operational delivery

- Demonstrable knowledge in SEND policy, pupil behaviour or mental health and the issues across the system for teachers and students;
- Knowledge in the areas of how to apply research evidence to develop effective policy and engage Union members at workplace level.
- Experience and understanding gained from working with teachers and leaders;
- Ability to plan and deliver a range of activities and work within deadlines; including planning meetings, compiling actions/minutes.
- Experience of working collaboratively; including around planning Conferences or meetings.
- Experience of how organisations work with key stakeholders to develop and challenge policy, preferable within the education sector;
- Strong IT skills including Microsoft Office Suite together with any other IT applications necessary for delivery of the role;
- Ability to support research projects, draw on the findings of research; and analyse research evidence and use it in this policy area.

Additional

Work demands

- The ability to work under pressure and deliver to critical deadlines.
- The requirement to work evenings, weekends or flex working arrangements which are necessary for the performance of the role;

- The requirement to travel to attend activities, conferences and meetings away from the normal place of work, and which may involve stays away from home. These could be locally, regionally, nationally;

Additional relevant requirements

- Is firmly committed to the trade union movement and in particular to the role of education unions.
- Understanding of equal opportunities issues in education and has a commitment to promote diversity and oppose unfair treatment;
- Knowledge and understanding of current legislation, political and economic issues, including those relating to employment rights, trade unions and the public sector;
- The requirement to undertake professional development and training as necessary for the performance of the role.

This role description will be kept under review and can be adapted to meet the changing needs of the National Education Union, subject to appropriate consultation.