

# Executive Assistant to the CEO

**Reports to:** Kiran Gill, CEO & Lily Bissett, People, Finance & Operations Director

**Start date:** As soon as possible

**Location:** Hybrid with 50% office presence in London

**Contract:** Full-time, permanent

**Salary:** Depending on experience, in salary range £30-40k (+6% employer pension contribution)

**Interview dates:** Virtually from the week commencing Monday 2nd December and in-person interviews week commencing 9th December

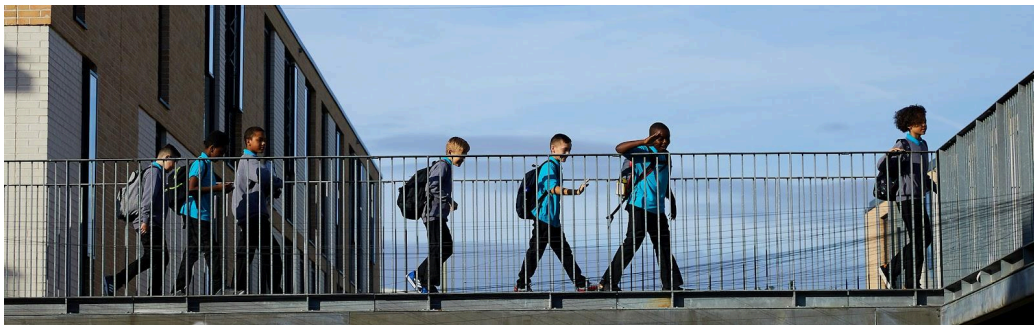
**Closing Date for Applications:** Midnight on Monday 25th November

## Our Organisation

The Difference is a young education charity, founded to change the story on lost learning. By 2030, we want rates of exclusion and absence to be falling nationally and for schools to be better equipped to support all children, including those who may be vulnerable.

The Difference was born out of [a year of research into school exclusions with think-tank IPPR](#). This research identified a lack of inclusion expertise in schools and proposed a new leadership development programme to fill this gap. In 2018, Difference founder [Kiran](#) hired the team who took this idea from concept to reality, beginning work with our first schools.

The Difference is now a 22-strong team delivering multiple school leadership programmes, alongside a growing research and policy arm. The team is supported by our Youth Advisory Board, made up of young people who have experienced exclusion and who provide their expertise and insights on how school inclusion work should be done. This work is needed more than ever. Effects of COVID-19, coupled with the spiralling cost of living, have substantially increased levels of vulnerability. Schools serving excluded pupils face under-funding. The Difference has had excellent early impact but there is work ahead to capture this, share learning with schools and policy-makers, and grow our capacity to lower exclusions across England.



## The Challenge Ahead: Executive Assistant

The Difference is a growing charity, in both the size of its team and the reach of its delivery. As our delivery and team both grow, we must develop our ability to manage competing strategic priorities and their demands on our time, and to communicate and collaborate effectively across a wider group of colleagues, Trustees and external stakeholders. This requires a high level of coordination, strategic time management, and internal communication that we have not needed until now - qualities which we hope you will help to foster and grow.

As the Executive Assistant, you will work closely with the CEO and Directors to develop a deep understanding of the organisation's strategic goals, how they interrelate, and the operational approaches designed to achieve them. Through this awareness, you will work with the Exec team to manage their time and input towards the charity's goals; ensure effective communication across The Difference team and with external stakeholders; as well as personally delivering on key projects across the charity.

The Executive Assistant will also work with our Directors and Trustees to improve our Governance - implementing new risk management and impact reporting to the board and overseeing a Governance Review. You will lead on the recruitment of new board members and scope opportunities to involve young trustees who may need additional support and upskilling.



## Why Work for The Difference?

Schooling isn't working for the children who need it most. Every week in England 109 children – equivalent to three full classrooms – are permanently excluded. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Since the pandemic, school suspensions have risen significantly, as has persistent absenteeism. 1 in 5 children are missing more than 10% of their time in school. Children who are excluded or persistently absent are much more likely to already be experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. They are more likely to live in poverty, have additional learning needs, suffer mental health challenges, or experience a lack of safety outside school. Certain ethnicities are also disproportionately affected, notably Gypsy Roma Traveller and black Caribbean children.

Exclusion and high rates of absence can have a dramatic effect on life chances. These young people are more likely to drop out of education or employment, become vulnerable to long-term mental ill health, or be at risk of criminal exploitation. The Difference believes that children and young people deserve better and that the education system has to change.

## Our Values

- **High Expectations** - We are ambitious for excellence from young people, colleagues and ourselves. We don't believe in writing off someone's potential because of their identity or experience of crisis.
- **Strong Relationships** - We prioritise genuine relationships over transactional interactions, and know that this requires deliberate relational practice. We see colleagues and partners as people first and their roles second; and know this greater trust allows us to take more risks, gain more feedback and have greater impact.
- **Internalised Locus of Control** - We work hard to reframe difficult situations to discover what we have within our power in terms of solutions. We take it upon ourselves to walk towards challenges and can take a high level of ownership and agency in our work.
- **Pragmatism** - We believe leadership means recognising current limitations and striving for improvements within and beyond them. We develop consensus and chart new ways forward, challenging false and extreme positions like "zero exclusions" or "no excuses".
- **Scientific approach** - We take a diagnostic approach to unpicking causes of problems. We are loud and proud of our failures, recognising failing fast and often is key to finding the best solutions. We test solutions and are willing to use data and feedback to make adjustments and choose new directions.
- **Not Squeamish about Structural Inequality** - We believe patterns of inequality can and should be disrupted. We strive to be clear-eyed about these inequalities, and both the individual practice and system-changes required to address them. We push ourselves to overcome awkwardness in talking about this; and begin by acknowledging our own biases and blind spots.
- **Asset-based** - We work hard to avoid deficit thinking and aim to start with what's strong, not what's wrong. We are careful not to frame our colleagues and stakeholders - particularly young people and families – as victims but instead to recognise their agency.
- **Wise selves** - To both enjoy work and do their best, we want to make decisions and work with others in our "wise" - or regulated - selves. We also want to bring our compassionate self to those we work with, externally and internally, to support one another through challenging times.



## Key Tasks Required of this Role

### Internal Communication & Collaboration

- **Understand The Difference strategy and assist CEO in driving achievement** including via - setting agendas for and chasing actions from the **Directors' meetings**;
- holding running items of risk and KPI dashboards;
- setting agendas and chasing actions from the **Trustee Board meetings**;
- setting agendas for and chasing actions from **team meetings and team days**, communicating updates via weekly team email.
- **Coordinate cadence of organisational calendar** to deliver on strategic objectives, including helping teams be aware of one another's capacity and progress via weekly team email.
- **Develop junior team members'** ability to take minutes, chase actions and organise competing priorities e.g. RII Generalist, People & Culture Manager
- **Project manage special projects for the CEO when required**, e.g. Strategy process. NB - workload will be reviewed when special projects are taken on.

### Strategic support for CEO & Directors

- **Manage the CEO's inbox and diary on an ongoing basis** to ensure emails are responded to, CEO is abreast of developments and CEO diary continuously reflects current priorities, and responds to emerging needs.
- **Manage CEO's logistics**, including travel arrangements, venue booking and processing expenses.
- **Enable CEO** in helping Directors remain strategic over operational, including their focus on monitoring of risk and KPIs, preparation for meeting cycles (CEO 121, board, Directors', team) and facilitate scheduling where necessary.

### External Communications / Fundraising

- **Manage correspondence between CEO and external stakeholders**, including categorising incoming mail, and triaging or delegating to other team members where relevant. Triaging social media and co-drafting content with the CEO.
- **Manage fundraising relationships via inbox** including running the Development Committee cycle, ensuring CEO meets with funders and they have a quick response from her inbox, and tracking CEO's actions/progression of leads in hubspot (dotted line to Head of Fundraising)
- **Ensure a welcoming experience of The Difference** for external stakeholders, both for those visiting the office, and those reaching out via email or social media.

## Board & Governance

- **Project manage production of board papers**, including coordination of production, and ensuring timely input from across the Difference team.
- **Plan and coordinate Board meetings**, including supporting the Ops Director (dotted line on this), CEO and Chair to set agendas, and ongoing communication with all Trustees.
- **Take and distribute Board minutes**, and ensure timely follow up on any actions.
- **Organise and coordinate** Trustee engagement events, e.g. social dinners and school visits
- **Support** an end-to-end governance review of our Board practices and policies
- **Implement** a new risk management and impact reporting framework

## Person Specification

### Essential

- **Self-direction/autonomous worker** - Evidenced capacity to take high levels of ownership over your work, **proactively** anticipating problems that may arise, diagnosing need and changing course quickly; taking **initiative** within the role to ensure success.
- **Ability to take ownership over your self-development**, proactively diagnosing skills and information gaps and making use of others' expertise to continually grow your skills, and make a success of tasks at hand.
- **Strong communicator** - A clear communication style which is concise and effective - both verbally & written - as well as strong interpersonal skills.
- **Stakeholder management** - Evidence of having established, developed and managed effective relationships with a range of senior stakeholders.
- **Organisation & project management** – A track record of coordinating projects to tight timelines and a high standard, communicating proactively if timelines need to shift; as well as sharp attention to detail and thorough approach to organisation and project management.
- **Agility in problem-solving** – Ability to thrive in a fast-paced start-up environment, comfortable with making decisions in ambiguous contexts and rapidly diagnosing any need to reprioritise and change course; ability to think creatively/laterally and strategically to find the most effective solution.
- **Values** – A career or personal experience which evidences shared values with The Difference (see above) and a personal commitment to our mission to improve life outcomes for vulnerable people.

### Desired

- **Experience in start-up/charity sector** - An understanding of the fast-paced nature of start-up, and/or how small charities work.
- **Experience of diary management** for senior colleagues.
- **Experience of coordination across broad teams** - You may have worked in another role which sits across different functions within an organisation.



## How To Apply

Please click this [link](#) to access the application form.

**Applications close at midnight on Monday 25th November.**

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role prior to application, please contact [jobs@the-difference.com](mailto:jobs@the-difference.com), with a brief summary of your experience and questions that you have. We will attempt to offer calls to those who want, but please bear in mind that this may not be possible within our team's capacity.

We are committed to building a diverse team and strongly encourage applications from under-represented groups in the charity sector such as people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, people with experience in the care system, non-graduates and first-in-family graduates.

As part of our commitment to fairer recruitment, all applications will be assessed with names and any protected characteristics redacted.



## Recommended Reading

To understand more about The Difference and what we are trying to achieve, we recommend the following:

- The [research](#) which underpins our organisation
- Details of our founder's story as told in [Schools Week](#) and [TES](#)
- The work we undertook in our first year as a charity in our [2020-2021 Annual Report](#)
- Details of our most recent work and issues in the sector, as illustrated within our fortnightly [bulletin archive](#)