

Programmes Lead

Reports to: Head of Inclusive Leadership Course

Start date: ASAP or mid-August 2024

Location: London / Hybrid - minimum 3 days per week in office (The Difference's office in Bethnal Green). Willingness to travel for programme delivery across the North East, North West, and the Midlands 3 days per half term.

Contract: Permanent, full time/flexible working considered

Salary: £55k - £65k per annum (+6% employer pension contribution and sector-leading parental leave policy shared with all applicants)

Closing Date for Applications: Sunday 21st April 23:59

Person Specification

The Difference is seeking an outstanding school leader to take on the role of Programme Lead through an exciting period of growth and development, with a particular focus on developing our People and Practice work. The successful candidate will be instrumental in the delivery of our various programmes, actively engaging in their implementation and with valuable insights for continuous improvement.

This role offers a distinct chance to make a significant impact on The Difference's overarching strategic goals. As the Programme Lead, you'll have the opportunity to shape our programmes, ensuring they align with our mission and vision. Your contributions will not only drive tangible outcomes but will also shape the future direction of our organisation. You will have the opportunity to make a significant impact on the outcomes for children who experience vulnerability and disadvantage by working closely with school leaders to develop school practice and systems.

You will have real ownership over your area of work, be happiest in a flexible and ambitious environment, and enjoy testing out new ideas. You will have experience in professional development design, delivery, project management and supporting school staff and leaders through professional coaching.

Essential knowledge, experience and skills

- **Demonstrated Alignment with The Difference's values:** a history of actions and decisions that align with The Difference's values, showcasing a personal commitment to the mission of improving life outcomes for vulnerable children.

- **Credibility as a proven school leader of inclusion:** as a Trust middle leader, Headteacher, Deputy or Assistant Headteacher in a Primary or Secondary setting in contexts of high disadvantage and vulnerability.
- **A record of impact for children experiencing vulnerability:** including designing and delivering work that led to reduced harmful behaviours, repeat suspension or persistent absence.
- **A record of empowering work with children and families.**
- **Evidence of designing and delivering impactful professional development:** high quality learning sessions, fostering sustained staff development and contributing to a culture of continuous learning.
- **Understanding of Relational Practice within Education:** A track record of utilising or implementing practice aligned with the relational approaches to deliver improved student outcomes.
- **Aiming high and holding people accountable through visionary leadership:** Ability to articulate an ambitious vision, inspiring and motivating others to meet high standards. A proven ability to hold individuals accountable for their contributions.
- **Flexibility and a willingness to travel:** including overnight stays, particularly within London, and across the North East, North West, and the Midlands. A likely travel pattern of 2-3 days travel per fortnight.

Desired knowledge, experience and skills

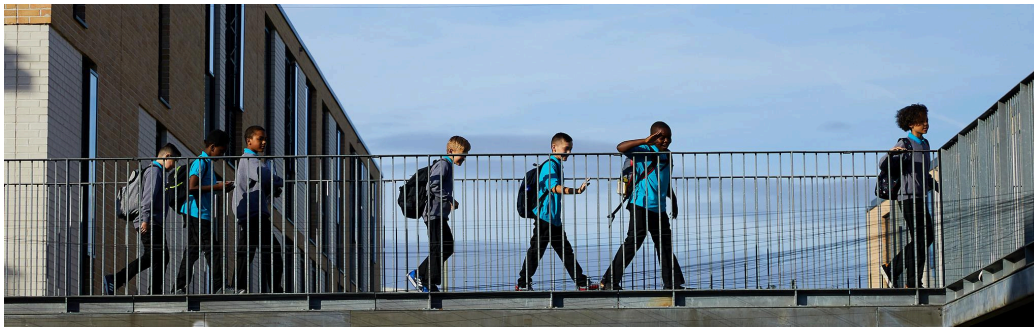
- **Stakeholder management & relationship-building:** proven experience in managing relationships with various stakeholders, including navigating HR processes and demonstrating effective stakeholder engagement skills. Experience of sales and a business to business sales process would be advantageous.
- **Adaptability:** track record of prioritising and creating clarity in ambiguous, challenging, or fast-paced situations. Experience in working directly with colleagues, implementing strategies such as coaching and structured reflection to establish clear and effective plans.
- **Research Engagement:** engagement with research and evidence-based strategies for school improvement. Demonstrable quantifiable impact using evidence-informed approaches.
- **Contextual Awareness:** varied experience in different schools, showcasing an understanding of how contextual factors impact schools and teachers, and an awareness of the wider educational landscape.
- **Teaching Qualification:** possession of Qualified Teacher Status, demonstrating the foundational qualification for the role.

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 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 scale this impact through our programmes, share learning with schools and policy-makers, and grow our capacity to lower exclusions across England.

The Task Ahead: Programme Lead

In 2019 The Difference launched our programmes working with 22 school leaders in London. Since then we have worked with 447 school leaders nationally. We want to continue to scale our programmes and reach more school leaders to help shape their schools practice and systems to improve pupil wellbeing, safety and belonging. We intend to further develop our programmes to improve inclusion in schools and successfully change the story for students currently struggling in school.

Key tasks for this role include:

- Deliver The Difference's Inclusive Leadership Course to senior leaders from a range of school settings. This takes place in venues across the country including but not limited to London, the North East, North West, and the Midlands. Confidence and passion to deliver the course to the high standards required.
- In-school support for The Difference's School Partnership (DSP). Delivering across a variety of schools including mainstream secondary, mainstream primary and Alternative Provision settings. Supporting the implementation of key themes and content from The Difference's Inclusive Leadership Course.
- Working closely with The Differences Research, Impact & Influencing team to capture case studies, research and impact metrics that demonstrate the impact of the Difference's programmatic work.
- Input to the evolution and development of the Difference's programmatic offer using insight from delivery and feedback from programme participants
- Working closely with the The Difference's Partnership and Sales team to support the reach and impact of the programmatic work.



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.

How To Apply

To apply, please complete all sections of [the application form](#) by midnight on **Sunday 21st April**.

First round interviews will be held during **the week beginning 6th May**, over video call. Please indicate if you would not be available to attend an interview during this week.

If successful in this stage, second round interviews (including a task to be completed the same day) will take place on **the week beginning 13th May**, at our office in Bethnal Green.

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role prior to application, please reach out to mohamed@the-difference.com.

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

If you'd like to understand more about The Difference and what we are trying to achieve, we would recommend the following:

- The [research](#) which underpins our organisation.
- Our latest [Impact Report](#), sharing our work in 2023



