



Policy Manager

RECRUITMENT PACK

Help us support families to get the right education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Thank you for your interest in joining the IPSEA team

Welcome to IPSEA! As you consider applying for the role of Policy Manager, picture yourself at the heart of a national charity, that champions positive change.

At IPSEA, we are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Joining our team means becoming a vital part of our mission, where your skills and passion will thrive in a supportive, inclusive environment.

If you are motivated by the opportunity to make a difference, we encourage you to consider joining IPSEA. Your expertise could be key to helping us continue our transformative impact on the lives of those we support.

This recruitment pack provides the information you need to apply for the **Policy Manager** role, including:

- Details of our vision, mission, values and strategic goals
- Information about the work we do, our impact and our future plans
- An overview of our organisational structure
- Information about the role, the job description and person specification
- An overview of our employee benefits.

If you wish to apply for the role, please visit: <https://hr.breathehr.com/v/policy-manager-48185> where an application form is available to download. After completing the form, submit your application by clicking the 'apply' button at the bottom of the page. You will be asked for some personal details before being able to upload your form and CV. Should you have any issues uploading the form please email a copy to hr@ipsea.org.uk.

The closing date for applications is **9am on Monday, 7 September 2026**. First interviews will take place in person at our offices in **Takeley, Essex** in the week commencing **14 September**.

If you feel you have the qualities and experience needed to join our friendly team doing vital work to ensure children and young people with SEND receive the education they are legally entitled to, we would love to hear from you.

We look forward to receiving your application.

Best wishes

Madeleine Cassidy
Chief Executive, IPSEA

ABOUT IPSEA

OUR VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Our vision

Every child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities has the right education and support to thrive and achieve their potential.

Our mission

We use the law to help children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities get the education and support they are legally entitled to.

Our values

Focused

We are always focused on the child or young person in all that we do.

Inclusive

We welcome, respect, support and value our staff, our volunteers, our beneficiaries, and the communities accessing our services.

Adaptive

We actively listen and collaborate with openness and empathy and embrace continuous learning to create a positive culture.

Compassionate

We care about people; we appreciate other people's perspectives, and we are open to all. We understand our beneficiaries have different needs.

Accountable

We hold ourselves and others accountable for meeting our objectives and living our values.

Proactive

We anticipate challenges, seize opportunities and take initiatives that will drive meaningful change.

Our impact

- Children and young people with SEND receive the education and support to which they are legally entitled, to thrive and reach their potential.
- Local authorities, education settings and health bodies work together to make sure that children and young people receive the special educational provision and wider support they need and to which they are entitled.
- All aspects of the SEND legal framework are applied in full and function correctly to support children and young people with SEND, and existing legal rights are protected.
- Children and young people with SEND who have additional vulnerabilities from under-served communities receive the special educational provision to which they are entitled by law, eradicating inequalities they experience.

Our strategic goals

Our strategic goals in 2026-29

1. Empower all families of children and young people with SEND through expert legal information, advice, casework support and training.
2. Strengthen and enhance IPSEA's position as the leading charitable authority in SEND law.
3. Drive positive change within the SEND system to ensure the existing SEND legal framework is applied, protected and enforced through policy work and campaigning.
4. Train a broad range of professionals and practitioners to acquire the legal knowledge and skills to support all children and young people with SEND, with a particular focus on under-served communities.
5. Innovate and enhance IPSEA's operations, ensuring our services are family-centric and make best use of digital innovation and technologies.
6. Strengthen our organisational foundations and infrastructure to support capacity and growth ensuring sustainability and a positive focus on an inclusive culture and well-being.

WHAT WE DO

Children and young people with SEND are legally entitled to educational support that meets their individual needs, but they frequently fail to receive what the law says they should. Through our advice services, policy work and training, IPSEA is determined to change this.

Since IPSEA was formed in 1983, we have helped to improve educational support for thousands of children and young people with all kinds of SEND.

The impact of this can be life changing.

If the needs of children and young people with SEND are properly understood as a result of a thorough assessment, if the necessary provision is put in place to support them, and if that support is delivered in a suitable school, college or other setting, they are significantly less likely to experience multiple fixed term and/or permanent exclusions, end up out of education for long periods, experience mental health problems, end up “NEET” (not in Education, Employment or Training) or enter the criminal justice system.

Advice services

Supporting families to ensure that local authorities meet their legal obligations is the prime focus of IPSEA's work. We deliver our services across England, providing free one-off telephone advice and ongoing casework support to parents, carers and young people.

We run two helplines which operate on a call-back basis and a call-in helpline service. Our Advice Line provides one-off next step advice on any educational issue that relates to a child or young person's SEND, including exclusion from school, home to school transport, disability discrimination and the process for obtaining additional support for a child or young person.

On our Tribunal Helpline we give next step advice on appeals and disability discrimination claims to the SEND Tribunal. The Tribunal's role is to resolve disputes between parents/young people and local authorities where they are unable to agree on the support that a child or young person

with SEND requires. Parents and carers can be referred to our Tribunal Support Service for ongoing support.

Our call-in service is designed for people to access on the spot advice if they haven't been able to book an appointment on our Advice Line or Tribunal Helpline.

Through our Tribunal Support Service we can provide families with in-depth casework support, access to tailored workshops and guided telephone support. Casework support includes assistance with drafting appeal grounds, compiling evidence, assisting with the case management process, negotiating with local authority representatives, helping with paperwork and providing representation at the hearing. Workshops help parents and carers understand the tribunal process and extended telephone calls with experienced volunteers and advisers help parents and carers move through the tribunal process. We prioritise cases that are complex or where the parent's ability to advocate is limited – e.g. those who have literacy difficulties, for whom English is a second language, who have significant caring responsibilities or are themselves disabled.

Our advice services are enhanced by our easy to navigate website which is constantly reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects current law and policy and includes a series of template letters for parents and carers to use in securing the education their child is legally entitled to.

Policy work

In addition to the support we provide to families, we use the evidence gathered from our helplines and casework to influence SEND policy and practice, and to achieve systemic change at a local and national level. We are regarded as thought leaders in the field, and we have been instrumental in shaping SEND law and policy over the past four decades through strategic litigation, influencing government and collaborating with other organisations in the SEND sector.

Training

As well as training and supervising our volunteers, IPSEA's legal team devises and delivers a range of SEND law training to parents/carers, SENCOs, local authorities and other professionals working within the SEND system. Over the past year, we have trained over 1,400 parents and carers, ensuring they understand their children's legal rights and entitlements and that they feel empowered to enforce them.



FUTURE AMBITIONS

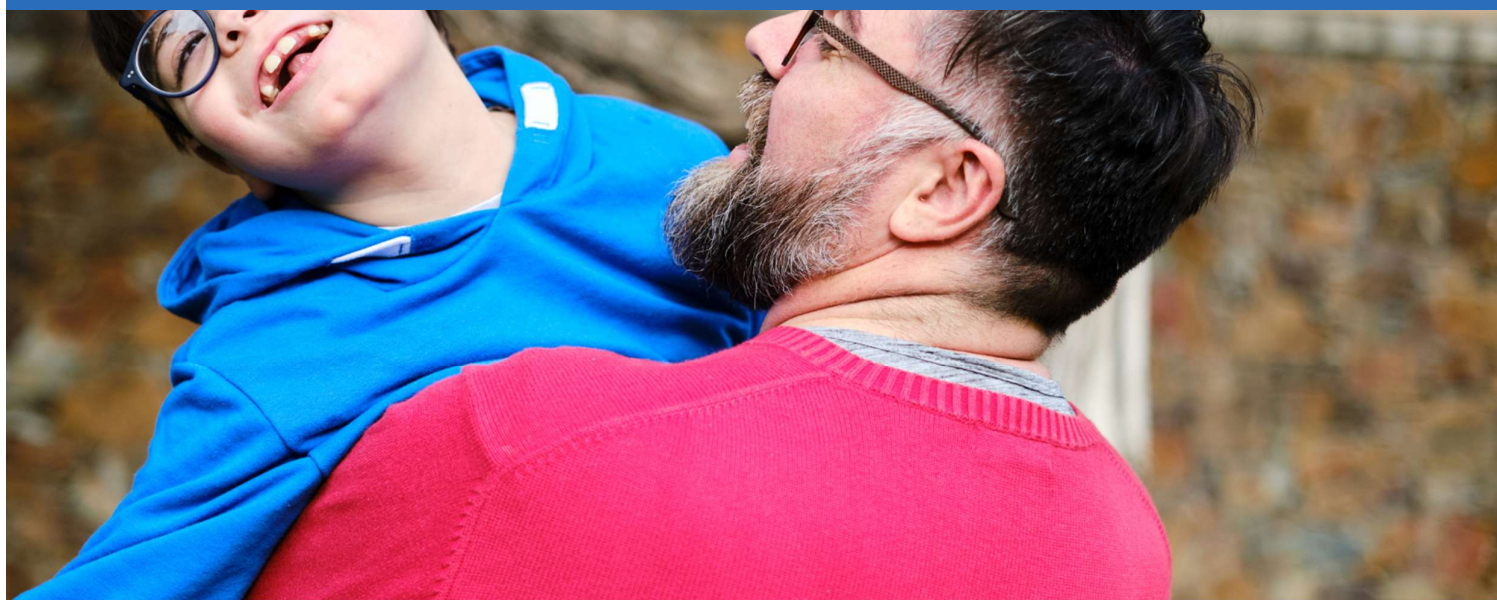
We have ambitious plans for the future. The next few years will pose significant challenges for children and young people with SEND. The Government has stated that it intends to reform the system for supporting children and young people with SEND, which may involve legislative change.

We want to ensure that whichever political party is in government, we are appropriately positioned to make sure that children and young people with SEND do not get forgotten as education policies are developed, and that their legal rights and entitlements are protected, promoted and upheld.

We also want to make greater use of technology and reach more of the families and young people who do not traditionally reach out to us, but who perhaps need us the most, including those in the care system, in penal detention and with an unsettled immigration status.

“The County Council were unhelpful through the latter stages of the process, but Sarah’s [IPSEA volunteer] voice had a weight at this time that mine simply no longer had. She was able to get responses from the local authority when I continued to be ignored. She was able to lend much-needed authority to our responses, and again for that, I am also very grateful.”

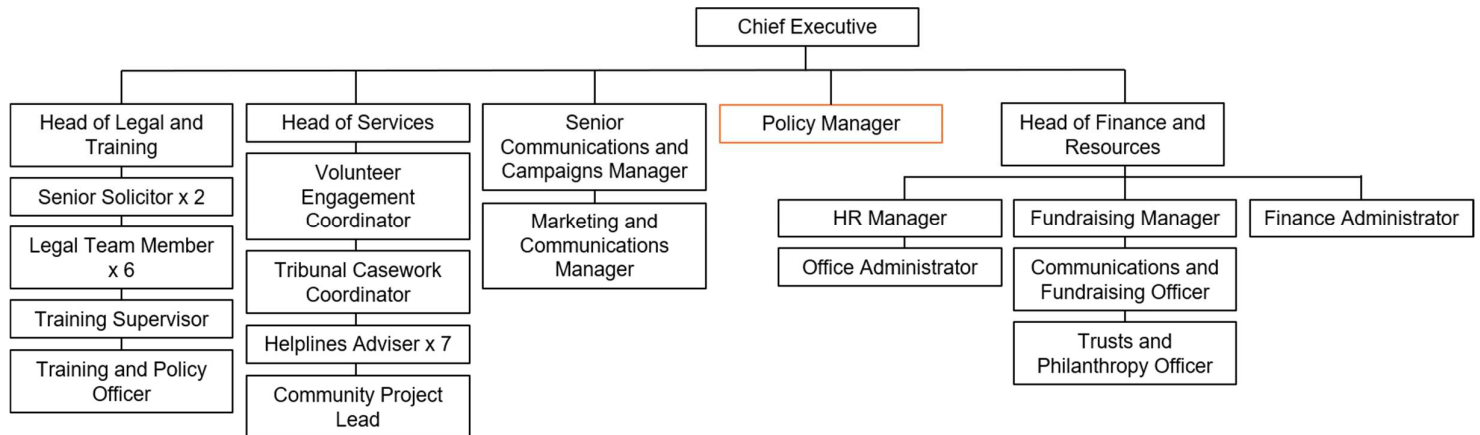
~ Parent helped through our Tribunal Support Service



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

We are a small charity with a turnover of circa £1,250,000, but we punch above our weight and hold a prominent position in the SEND sector. We have 33 members of staff working across five teams (Legal, Advice Services, Communications and Marketing, Fundraising and Finance) and around 80 volunteers. A significant proportion of our staff and volunteers have lived experience of parenting a child with SEND and the challenges associated with navigating the system in order to secure appropriate provision and support.

We are currently amending our organisational structure and a draft of our organogram is below:



ABOUT THE ROLE

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title:	Policy Manager
Location:	Home-based or Hybrid (with frequent travel for events and meetings with parliamentarians and other stakeholders)
Contract type:	Permanent
Hours:	Full-time (35 hours per week) or part-time (minimum 28 hours per week considered)
Salary:	£40,000 - £45,000 per annum (pro-rata if part-time)
Benefits:	5% employer pension contributions Healthcare cash plan Flexible working arrangements 25 days annual leave plus bank holidays (pro-rata if part-time) plus an additional day off for your birthday Paid sick and leave for unplanned life events We will provide a laptop, phone and other necessary IT equipment to facilitate hybrid and home working, if required.

OVERVIEW

IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice) is a national charity providing free and independent legally-based information, advice, and casework support to help children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the education they are entitled to. We also deliver training to parents, carers, and professionals to improve understanding of the SEND legal framework.

In response to the Government's White Paper that is proposing to significantly alter the SEND legal landscape, IPSEA is undertaking two major campaigns: one to protect existing legal rights, and another to make SEN Support a legal requirement.

IPSEA is co-leading the Save Our Children's Rights (SOCR) campaign alongside Special Needs Jungle and a coalition of over 100 public figures, charities and SEND advocates. This campaign was launched in response to proposed government reforms that could weaken the legal rights of children and young people with SEND; particularly the right to an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in mainstream schools. It calls on the Government to retain the current legal framework, ensure inclusive education is properly funded and accountable, and avoid any rollback of statutory protections.

In parallel, IPSEA is working in partnership with the charity Contact to advocate for placing SEN Support on a statutory footing. Currently, schools have limited legal obligations to support pupils with SEN who do not have an EHC plan.

This campaign seeks to establish stronger, enforceable duties on schools to provide SEN support, alongside increased investment, so that more children can have their needs met without requiring an EHC plan.

JOB PURPOSE

Working with IPSEA's Chief Executive and legal team, you will take lead responsibility for IPSEA's engagement with central and local government and key stakeholders, building on our established reputation and existing relationships.

Main duties and responsibilities

Policy leadership and management

- Work collaboratively with IPSEA's Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Training, and wider legal team to identify and agree IPSEA's policy priorities, including developing credible, evidence-based policy positions that are informed by our robust evidence base and capable of influencing decision-makers.
- Monitor the policy landscape and parliamentary activity relevant to IPSEA's policy priorities and develop and deliver policy and influencing plans that support the charity's strategic priorities.
- Lead the development of IPSEA's responses to government consultations, parliamentary inquiries, select committee investigations, All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) calls for evidence, and other relevant opportunities to influence law, policy and practice.
- Prepare briefings on policy issues for IPSEA's CEO and legal team to support engagement with key stakeholders.
- Work with the Chief Executive, other managers and trustees to review and update IPSEA's long-term strategic plan, leading on the strategy for policy and influencing.

Strategic influencing

- Develop and maintain effective relationships with key external stakeholders including local government officials, MPs, government ministers and civil servants to keep them informed about IPSEA's work and policy concerns.
- Organise and attend regular stakeholder meetings, representing IPSEA and forging contacts and relationships with key decision-makers and influencers.
- Represent IPSEA at external meetings, conferences, advisory groups and stakeholder forums, including IPSEA's SEND Law conference.
- Act as an internal and external ambassador for IPSEA's policy work.
- Work closely with colleagues in Communications, campaigns and fundraising to ensure policy positions are translated into clear, accessible and impactful public-facing messages, and contribute to the development of media, campaign and stakeholder communications.
- Maintain a central record of IPSEA's policy and influencing work.

Evidence and insight

- Work with colleagues across the organisation to identify evidence emerging from IPSEA's advice and casework services and use this to inform policy development and influencing activities.
- Engage people with experience of parenting a child with SEND in IPSEA's policy work and ensure the voices and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their

families are reflected in IPSEA's policy and campaigning work.

- Carry out desk research as required to support IPSEA's policy development.
- Prepare reports on IPSEA's policy work for IPSEA's Board of Trustees and fundraising team, and attend board meetings, as necessary.
- Keep abreast of important media stories relevant to IPSEA's work.

Management

- Lead Policy Team meetings with IPSEA's Legal team and other colleagues.
- Provide day-to-day management, supervision and support to the Policy Assistant, including setting priorities, monitoring the workload, conducting regular supervision meetings and supporting professional development.
- Ensure that policy work is delivered to a high standard and in line with organisational priorities and agreed deadlines.

Promote

- Promote IPSEA as an exceptional and specialist charity.

Equality and Diversity

- Promote good equality practice and play a key role in ensuring equality of opportunity in the workplace.
- Observe all relevant law relating to equality of opportunities.
- Encourage a working atmosphere where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Any Other Duties

- Post-holders will work collaboratively with all IPSEA trustees, staff and volunteers to provide a seamless service.
- Any other duties commensurate with the post.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

	Criteria
Knowledge, training and qualifications	Good knowledge of local and national government structure including the legislative process (Essential) Demonstrable understanding of what it takes to bring about meaningful policy change (Essential) Knowledge of the SEND sector and understanding of the issues facing parents/carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) (Desirable)
Experience	Significant experience in a senior policy and campaigning/public affairs role (Essential) Experience of building and maintaining relationships with a range of stakeholders including MPs and civil servants (Essential) Experience of using critical thinking skills to analyse policy and data to produce relevant reports and position papers (Essential) Experience of drafting organisation responses to government consultations and parliamentary calls for evidence (Essential)

	Experience of supervision and managing the work of others, including direct reports (Essential) Experience of drafting communications content to highlight and gain support for an organisation's policy work (Desirable) Experience of managing policy related research projects (Desirable) Experience of involving beneficiaries in the development of policy priorities (Desirable)
Skills	Ability to structure, substantiate and draft compelling policy positions (Essential) Excellent written communication skills, in particular the ability to communicate accurately and succinctly to a variety of audiences (Essential) Excellent verbal communication skills and the ability to build effective relationships and to be impactful with people of varying levels and experience (Essential) Excellent research skills (Essential) Excellent organisational skills with the ability to multitask, manage workload independently and work to tight deadlines (Essential) Microsoft Office packages including SharePoint, Word, Outlook, Excel and PowerPoint experience (Essential)
Personal attributes	Ability to work well within a team and willingness to take on a range of tasks as necessary (Essential) Ability to exhibit diplomacy and tact (Essential) Ability to deal with sensitive information with discretion and to always maintain confidentiality (Essential) Share knowledge of ways of working and participate in training as and when required (Essential) An interest in and understanding of IPSEA's mission and strategy, contributing to the development of IPSEA (Essential) A commitment to treating colleagues and beneficiaries fairly, consistently and with respect (Essential)

NEXT STEPS

If you would like to apply for the role, please visit <https://hr.breathehr.com/v/policy-manager-48185> where an application form is available to download.

The closing date for applications is **9am on Monday, 7 September 2026**. Interviews will take place at our offices in Takeley, Essex on **15 September 2026**, with second-round interviews (online) on **18 September 2026**.

Note: A basic DBS check is required for the successful candidate.



www.ipsea.org.uk

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