JOB PURPOSE:

MSA supports young people presenting with autism and other neurodevelopmental differences, developmental trauma, attachment and relational difficulties, emotional dysregulation and associated mental health needs.

The Assistant Psychologist will work as a key member of MindSenseAbility's multidisciplinary wellbeing and psychology provision, supporting the psychological, emotional and developmental needs of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The aim is to support a gradual re-engagement with education and learning alongside utilising various types of therapeutic input across the Multidisciplinary Team as a means to achieve this.

LINE MANAGEMENT

Assistant Psychologists will report to the Lead Clinical Psychologist.

PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

Assistant Psychologists will be professionally accountable to the HCPC-registered Clinical Psychologists within the service.

The post holder will not independently provide psychological diagnosis, psychological therapy, formal clinical risk assessment or other restricted professional activities beyond their competence or delegated responsibilities.

The post holder is expected to recognise the limits of their role, seek appropriate supervision and escalate concerns when a young person's needs exceed their level of training or competence.

LOCATION:

The role spans East Street Farm School, The Hub Alternative Provision, and community-based work with young people and families across Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.

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MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES:

Psychological Assessment and Formulation

- Support qualified Clinical Psychologists with psychological assessment and formulation of young people's needs, drawing on information from direct observation, consultation, developmental history, Education Health and Care Plans and other relevant sources
- Undertake agreed psychological assessments and observations within the scope of competence and under appropriate supervision.
- Contribute to psychologically informed formulations that consider developmental history, neurodevelopmental differences, trauma and adverse experiences, attachment and relationships, communication, sensory processing, emotional regulation, learning and cognitive factors, as well as environmental and systemic factors.
- Contribute to assessment and formulation meetings with education and multidisciplinary colleagues.
- Translate formulations into practical recommendations that can be implemented consistently across the service.
- Maintain accurate, appropriate and contemporaneous clinical and educational records.

Psychological Intervention

- Plan, deliver and support psychologically informed interventions and resources under the supervision of a qualified Clinical Psychologist.
- Work collaboratively with members of the multidisciplinary team, specialist teaching staff, families and carers and other external agencies to promote positive outcomes for young people.
- Support individual (and group-based where indicated) interventions addressing areas such as emotional regulation, psychological well-being, anxiety, social understanding, self-esteem, coping strategies, relationships, transitions and engagement with education.
- Adapt psychological approaches to meet the communication, sensory, cognitive and developmental needs of autistic young people and those with complex SEND.
- Support trauma-informed approaches that promote safety, predictability, co-regulation and relational security.
- Help staff understand the function of behaviour and develop psychologically informed responses to effectively support distress and dysregulation.

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- Monitor intervention outcomes and contribute to reviewing and adapting interventions.
- Recognise the limits of the role and escalate concerns appropriately where presentations require assessment or intervention beyond the post holder's competence.

Consultation and Staff Support

- Provide psychologically informed consultation to Specialist Teachers, Teaching Assistants, and other members of the Multidisciplinary team under the supervision of a qualified Clinical Psychologist.
- Support staff to develop psychologically informed understanding of individual young people's needs.
- Facilitate reflective discussions and contribute to staff problem-solving around complex presentations under the supervision of a qualified Clinical Psychologist.
- Develop and deliver training or psychoeducation to staff on agreed topics, such as autism and neurodiversity; developmental trauma; emotional regulation; anxiety; behaviour as communication; psychologically informed approaches to behaviour support; mental health and wellbeing; supporting transitions and change.
- Promote consistency in the application of agreed psychological approaches across the service.

Trauma-Informed and Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice

- Promote an understanding of behaviour as communication and consider the underlying developmental, relational, sensory and environmental factors influencing presentation.
- Support approaches that recognise the impact of developmental trauma and adverse experiences on emotional and relational development.
- Support the service to adopt trauma-informed approaches that prioritise relational safety, predictability, choice, collaboration and emotional regulation.
- Promote and apply neurodiversity-affirming principles, recognising autistic differences as part of human neurodevelopment while identifying and addressing areas of genuine distress, disability or unmet need.
- Consider the impact of developmental trauma and adverse experiences without making assumptions about individual young people's histories, experiences or needs.
- Promote approaches that reduce unnecessary demands, shame, threat and exclusion.

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- Encourage approaches that promote: psychological safety, co-regulation, choice, predictability, relational security, agency, participation and belonging.
- Contribute to psychologically informed approaches to behaviour support and risk management.

Multidisciplinary and Multi-Agency Working

Under the guidance and supervision of a qualified Clinical Psychologist to:

- Work collaboratively with the Multidisciplinary team and external agencies or professionals involved in the young person's care.
- Attend and contribute to multidisciplinary meetings, care planning meetings, reviews and professional consultations.
- Liaise appropriately with parents, carers and families, recognising their expertise and contribution to understanding the young person.
- Support effective communication between psychology and the wider staff team.
- Contribute to coordinated planning around complex presentations and transitions between services or educational settings.

Safeguarding and Risk

- Maintain a high level of awareness of safeguarding, contextual safeguarding and child protection responsibilities.
- Follow organisational safeguarding procedures and report concerns promptly and appropriately.
- Contribute to risk assessment and risk management processes / Positive Behaviour Support Plans within the limits of the role.
- Recognise and appropriately escalate concerns relating to self-harm, suicidal ideation, exploitation, abuse, neglect, serious behavioural risk, significant deterioration in mental health or other risks concerning the welfare of a young person.
- Understand the particular safeguarding vulnerabilities that may affect autistic young people and young people with communication difficulties or developmental trauma.
- Work within relevant legal, ethical and organisational frameworks.

Research, Evaluation and Quality Improvement

- Support the collection, analysis and interpretation of outcome and behavioural data.
- Contribute to audits, service evaluations and quality improvement projects.

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- Apply knowledge of psychological theory and research to inform practice.
- Support the evaluation of psychological interventions and school-wide wellbeing initiatives.
- Assist with literature reviews and the development of evidence-informed resources as needed.
- Present findings and recommendations to relevant colleagues where appropriate.
- Promote a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement.

Leadership and Responsibilities

- Provide day-to-day support and guidance to other members of staff, as agreed and under the supervision of a qualified Clinical Psychologist.
- Support the induction of new staff.
- Support the induction and transition of new students into the service (whether this is into East Street Farm Specialist SEND School or the Hub), under the supervision of a qualified Clinical Psychologist.
- Help coordinate psychology-related activity, projects, resources and interventions across the service.
- Act as a positive role model for psychologically informed practice.
- Contribute to the development of psychology provision within the service.
- Identify service gaps and make appropriate recommendations to the supervising Clinical Psychologist.
- Support the implementation of agreed psychology service priorities and projects.
- Represent psychology appropriately within the wider multidisciplinary team.

Professional Practice

- Work within the limits of competence and seek appropriate supervision and consultation.
- Attend weekly supervision with a qualified Clinical Psychologist.
- Participate in reflective practice and Continuing Professional Development.
- Maintain professional standards, boundaries and confidentiality.
- Comply with relevant organisational policies, professional guidance, information governance and data protection requirements.
- Maintain accurate records and communicate information clearly and appropriately.

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- Recognise and manage the emotional impact of working with young people experiencing significant adversity, trauma and mental health difficulties.

General Responsibilities

- Promote equality, diversity, inclusion and dignity in all aspects of work.
- Promote the wellbeing, participation and voice of young people.
- Maintain confidentiality and comply with information governance requirements.
- Undertake duties in accordance with school policies and procedures.
- Participate in supervision, appraisal and professional development.
- Undertake other reasonable duties consistent with the level and purpose of the post.
- Contribute to a positive, reflective and psychologically safe working culture.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

To abide by all MSA policies and procedures.

SAFER RECRUITMENT & SAFEGUARDING:

This post is subject to an Enhanced DBS check with relevant barred list checks, which will be renewed 3-yearly. Staff are encouraged to join the update service.

MSA is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults. **We expect all employees to share this commitment.** We will ensure that all our recruitment and selection practices reflect this commitment.

MINDSENSEABILITY (MSA) OFFERS:

- A service which is supportive and aspirational
- An opportunity to influence the development of the MSA provision
- Induction so you will be welcomed in as part of our team from the start
- A commitment to continuing professional development
- Directors and colleagues who will listen, support, challenge and welcome your ideas

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PERSON SPECIFICATION:

Essential Qualifications & Training	• Degree in Psychology (2:1 or above), or a BPS-accredited conversion course • Psychology degree accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS), providing Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC), or equivalent eligibility • Relevant training or experience in psychological assessment, intervention, research methods or psychologically informed practice • Evidence of continuing professional development relevant to the role
Desirable Qualifications & Training	• Postgraduate qualification or further training in psychology, mental health, education, SEND, autism, trauma, attachment or a related discipline • Training in trauma-informed practice • Training or experience in autism and/or neurodevelopmental conditions. • Training in safeguarding, mental health or risk management • Training or experience in delivering psychological or psychoeducational interventions
Essential Experience, Skills and Knowledge	Experience • Experience working with people with psychological, developmental, educational or mental health needs • Experience applying psychological theory to assessment, intervention, consultation or support • Experience supporting individuals with emotional dysregulation, anxiety, behavioural difficulties or mental health needs • Experience working within professional boundaries and under supervision. • Experience supporting or guiding colleagues, students or less experienced staff Skills • Strong interpersonal skills • Able to demonstrate sound professional judgement and the ability to work effectively with complexity while recognising the boundaries of the Assistant Psychologist role. • Ability to establish effective and respectful relationships with young people (who may have significant communication, emotional or behavioural difficulties), their families and the wider network • Ability to communicate psychological concepts clearly to non-psychologists • Ability to adapt communication for developmental, cognitive and communication needs • Ability to work collaboratively within a multidisciplinary team • Ability to contribute to formulation and translate it into practical recommendations

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	• Ability to translate psychological theory and evidence into accessible, practical approaches that can be implemented consistently within a specialist educational environment • Ability to observe and understand patterns of behaviour and emotional presentation • Ability to plan, deliver and evaluate psychologically informed interventions within competence • Ability to analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data • Good written communication skills, including the ability to produce clear professional reports and records • Good organisational skills and ability to manage competing priorities • Ability to work independently while recognising when supervision or escalation is required • Ability to contribute confidently to professional discussions • Ability to maintain professional boundaries in complex and emotionally demanding situations • Compassionate, empathic and respectful approach • Emotionally resilient and able to work effectively with distressing or complex material • Reflective and psychologically minded • Curious and willing to consider multiple perspectives • Calm and consistent when responding to distress or dysregulation • Non-judgemental and respectful of neurodiversity • Comfortable working with uncertainty and complexity • Open to feedback, supervision and challenge • Committed to anti-discriminatory and inclusive practice • Able to recognise and value the expertise of young people, families and education staff • Committed to evidence-informed practice and continuous learning • Able to balance warmth and relational sensitivity with appropriate professional authority • Ability to work flexibly across our specialist educational environments, including at locations within the community. • Ability to respond appropriately to situations involving emotional distress, dysregulation or challenging behaviour. • Willingness to undertake relevant safeguarding and mandatory training. • Commitment to maintaining confidentiality and professional standards. Knowledge • Understanding of autism and neurodevelopmental differences

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	• Understanding of mental health difficulties commonly experienced by children and young people • Understanding of formulation-based approaches and their importance • Understanding of psychologically informed approaches to behaviour and emotional regulation • Knowledge of Positive Behaviour Support and functional approaches to understanding behaviour • Understanding of safeguarding and child protection • Understanding of confidentiality, information governance and professional boundaries • Knowledge of research methodology and evidence-based practice • Understanding of the importance of adapting psychological approaches to developmental, cognitive, communication and sensory needs • Awareness of the limits of the Assistant Psychologist role and the importance of professional supervision • An understanding of how to embed MSA's values of Nurturing Belonging, Supporting Growth and Inspiring Change in everyday practice, creating a warm, compassionate and child-centred environment where every student feels valued and supported to thrive
Desirable Experience, Skills and Knowledge	Experience • Experience working with autistic children or young people and/or young people with complex SEND • Experience working within a specialist SEND school, alternative provision, residential setting or specialist clinical/educational service • Experience working with young people affected by developmental trauma, adverse childhood experiences or attachment difficulties • Experience of undertaking psychological assessments, including scoring and interpreting standardised outcome measures • Experience of developing psychological formulations that are informed by clinical assessment • Experience of delivering evidence-based interventions that are guided by psychological formulation, under the supervision of a qualified Clinical Psychologist • Experience in evaluating individual or group psychological interventions • Experience working in multidisciplinary or multi-agency environments • Experience of delivering psychologically informed consultation to staff • Experience of delivering staff training or psychoeducation • Experience contributing to multi-agency safeguarding discussions • Experience collecting, analysing and interpreting psychological, educational or outcome data

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	• Experience contributing to service evaluation, audit, research or quality improvement Skills • Skills in delivering individual or group interventions and/or psychoeducational programmes • Skills in delivering training or presentations to staff • Ability to select and use appropriate psychological assessment tools • Experience using statistical or qualitative analysis software • Experience developing accessible resources for young people with SEND • Experience co-facilitating reflective practice or consultation • Ability to support and develop psychological understanding of less experienced colleagues Knowledge • Working knowledge of psychological theory and its application to children and young people • Understanding of the impact of developmental trauma and adverse experiences on emotional, relational and behavioural development • Knowledge of systemic, attachment and/or relational approaches • Knowledge of trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming practice • Knowledge of relevant SEND legislation and educational frameworks • Knowledge of mental health legislation and/or relevant NHS or social care pathways • Knowledge of approaches to reducing restrictive practices and promoting least-restrictive, relationally informed support
Other – Essential	• Have an Enhanced DBS • Holds a full driving licence with access to a car for community visits

Signed in acknowledgement of the Job Description and Person Specification for the role of Assistant Psychologist.

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE		
SIGNED	PRINT	DATE

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