
Chief operating officer – job description and person specification

Location:	Birmingham or London with frequent travel
Responsible to:	Chief executive
Responsible for:	Director of operations, associate director of operational programmes, associate director of quality, practice and compliance, personal assistant.

About the role

As a critical member of the chief officers' group, the chief operating officer (COO) will provide strategic oversight of all operational service delivery at Sense. This includes ensuring the highest standards of quality and impact across our services, supporting long-term transformational change, and aligning delivery with our vision, strategy, and values. The COO will act as the nominated individual for Sense's registration with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and lead our registration with other regulators wherever possible and appropriate, including Ofsted, Care inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA).

Objectives

- Place disabled people with complex needs at the heart of our operational services, through effective co-production, participation and consultation, giving up power to the people we support wherever possible.
- Provide executive leadership to ensure all Sense services are high-quality, innovative, compliant, and clearly aligned with the organisation's strategic goals and values.



- Lead long-term strategic planning and transformational change to modernise services, challenge conventional practice, and future-proof the organisation.
- Oversee the design and evolution of Sense's service portfolio, ensuring it is inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the changing needs of the people we support.
- Establish and lead effective systems for monitoring performance and quality, using data-driven insights to drive continuous improvement and regulatory compliance.
- Sponsor and direct capital and infrastructure programmes that enhance Sense's service environments and operational capabilities.
- Represent Sense at a national level, cultivating strong relationships with regulators, commissioners, funders, and sector partners to advance our purpose and influence.

Leadership in the chief officers' group

- Demonstrates strong leadership as both a skill and a professional interest, consistently modelling Sense's values in approach and decision-making.
- Shares collective responsibility for corporate leadership across the chief officer group, actively driving cultural and strategic change through all roles by championing transformation, embedding change management principles, and contributing to the direction and success of Sense beyond individual functions.
- Leads proactively and empowers others to lead across departments and disciplines through a matrixed, collaborative approach.
- Possesses emotional intelligence and coaching and mentoring skills to support team and peer development.
- Acts as the executive lead for one or more committees of the board of trustees and brings experience of working closely with trustees or other non-executives.
- Models and embeds Sense's values through inclusive, values-led leadership, demonstrating a sustained commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion—actively championing disability equality through the social model of disability, and upholding the



rights and responsibilities of all individuals to foster a fair and respectful culture, for example by actively promoting anti-racism across the organisation.

- Supports and contributes to Sense's active response to the climate crisis, aligning leadership with sustainability and social responsibility goals.
- Lead a culture of collaboration and inclusion by embedding co-production and participatory methods in the development, implementation, and evaluation of work across the organisation.

Key responsibilities

- Lead a culture of co-production and active participation, ensuring that disabled people with complex needs hold power and lead the design of Sense's services wherever possible.
- Provide executive leadership for all Sense services, ensuring modern, innovative, high-quality provision that aligns with emerging best practices.
- Ensure services are fully compliant with regulatory and statutory requirements (including Ofsted, CQC, CIW, RQIA and local authorities).
- Promote a strong culture of safeguarding and safe practice across the organisation.
- Develop robust systems for outcome and impact measurement, using data to inform improvements and innovations.
- Lead long-term strategic planning across operational functions, contributing to the organisation's overarching strategy.
- Drive transformational change initiatives to deliver sustainable improvements in quality, reach, and efficiency.
- Champion co-production with disabled people with complex needs, families, and communities in all aspects of design and delivery.
- Oversee the design and evolution of service models and programmes to ensure they are financially viable, person-centred, and future-focused.



- Ensure services respond to the changing needs of disabled people with complex needs, local and national commissioning priorities, and emerging trends.
- Lead strategic performance management systems, ensuring delivery against key performance indicators and regulatory benchmarks.
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and learning across services.

Sponsor and oversee significant capital programmes, ensuring that Sense's environments meet the needs of those we support and reflect our ambition for excellence.

- Ensure infrastructure supports operational effectiveness, from digital systems to estate development.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with regulators, commissioners, funders, and other strategic stakeholders.
- Represent Sense at a national level in networks, sector groups, and public forums.
- Responsible for strategic oversight of budgets within their directorate, ensuring effective resource allocation, financial compliance, and alignment with Sense's priorities.
- Champion co-production and participatory approaches by actively reviewing and shaping current and future projects, initiatives, and strategic actions in collaboration with stakeholders, partners, and communities.

Person specification

- Significant senior leadership experience in commissioned education, health, or social care services for disabled children and/or adults.
- Proven track record of leading complex, multi-site service operations at scale.
- Experience of overseeing service delivery in England, Wales and/or Northern Ireland
- Deep understanding of regulatory environments, including CQC, CIW, RQIA and Ofsted, and the responsibilities of a Nominated Individual.



- Experience of managing national grant-funded programmes or similar large-scale externally funded initiatives.
- Strategic safeguarding expertise, including leadership in safe practice and regulatory compliance.
- Demonstrable experience of driving transformational change and service redesign.
- Understanding of impact measurement and quality assurance frameworks.
- Track record of challenging traditional approaches and delivering modern, inclusive services.
- Maintains regulatory and legal compliance within their areas of functional expertise, while remaining inquisitive and up to date on developments that may impact Sense.
- Demonstrates a deep commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, particularly disability equality, through the lens of the social model of disability.
- A commitment to disabled people with complex needs and Sense's vision and values; a willingness to learn how to communicate with disabled people with complex needs and identify the barriers to their participation in all aspects of Sense's work.
- High standard of literacy and numeracy, with the ability to interpret complex information, draft strategic documents, and communicate effectively at all levels.
- Proficient in using workplace technologies—including AI tools, collaboration platforms, and data visualisation—to enhance effectiveness of self and team, and support timely, informed decision-making. Strong digital literacy with an appreciation of the societal benefits of online services.

Our values

Everything we do is underpinned by five core values.

- We include
- We collaborate
- We find a way



- We challenge
- We celebrate

Other information

- This job description does not form part of the employment contract.
- This post is not exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

July 2025