

Role profile

Service Manager – Children’s Services

Our values:

We are dedicated, respectful, collaborative. We are Milton Keynes City Council.

Service

Reports to	Head of Service
Job family	Professional and Technical
Grade	L
Political restricted?	N
DBS required?	Y – Enhanced plus barred list Child and Adult
Date	January 2026
JE Code	JE2493

Key deliverables

1	<p>To be operationally responsible for the management of the relevant service providing high quality leadership and management to the Team Managers to ensure the very highest professional practice.</p> <p>Taking responsibility (within the council scheme of delegation) for the range of complex emergency and planned independent decision making required to ensure the safety of children and young people.</p>
2	Be responsible for monitoring the performance and implementation of the practice framework to promote the highest levels of practice and across the wider service.
3	To provide strategic leadership in developing and sustaining effective multi-agency partnerships, fostering strong collaborative relationships that ensure children and young people are safeguarded and supported. To champion and embed a robust multi-agency approach across Children’s Social Care.
4	<p>MASH/Family Support: Service Managers will be wholly responsible for ensuring that Children and Families Assessments, Child In Need, Child Protection Plans and plans for children who are subject of care proceedings are SMART to ensure they are of good quality, robust, holistic and child centred.</p> <p>Corporate Parenting: The Service Manager for Corporate Parenting will provide leadership and oversight for the provision of our Fostering Service, our Residential Home at Westminster House, and ensuring effective care planning for children in care and care-experienced young people, securing the delivery of high-quality services that fully meet their needs and promote positive outcomes.</p>
5	Drive forward the key priorities, ethos, and values of the service by working in collaboration with the Heads of Service and wider Children’s Services Leadership Team.
6	Be the lead for contributing to the work of MK Together by ensuring active management participation at task and finish groups, panels, and safeguarding boards. Providing expertise in relation to children safeguarding and effective management of statutory safeguarding functions.

Within reason these key deliverables may evolve to meet service need and it is expected that you will be flexible and adaptable in your delivery to meet both service and city council wide needs

Essential requirements Key skills, expertise, and qualifications

1	Qualified Social Worker with a valid Social Work England registration, eligible to work in the UK and hold a UK driving licence.
2	Minimum of five years post qualifying experience in social work with children and families at risk. This should include extensive management experience. Track record of highly effective practice management or supervisory experience is essential.
3	To have expert knowledge of children's social work, including safeguarding, statutory responsibilities, and assessment frameworks.
4	Be able to demonstrate excellent organisational skills, a head for complexity, and know how to improve services. Demonstrate the skills to continuously monitor, manage, and develop service, team, and individual performance.
5	High level of written and oral communication skills and ability to tailor to a wide range of audiences.
6	Experience in strong working relationships with partners and stakeholders including health, police. Excellent influencing, negotiating, advocacy skills, including the ability to work with a wide range of stakeholders including children, young people, parents, and carers in a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency context at all levels of the organisation.
7	Understanding of the political context and environment of local government.
8	An Enhanced DBS with barred list Child and Adult will be required as the role will be working within a regulated activity providing advice/guidance on physical, emotional, or educational wellbeing.

Job family

Professional and Technical (Grade L)

Colleague expectations

- Be professional at all times
- Work together for the good of the team, city council and local people
- Promote a supportive culture
- Challenge assumptions
- Take ownership
- Be willing to change and do things differently
- Always work in a safe manner

Manager expectations

- Be a role model by displaying positive behaviours at all times
- Make well-considered decisions
- Support, coach and communicate with my team
- Be accountable for my team's performance

Professional and Technical job holders rely upon their deep knowledge of the specialism or discipline in which they work to carry out vital tasks and provide authoritative advice to others. Often developing within recognised career paths, their evolving expertise sees them bear increasing responsibility for managing city council assets, the development of policies and procedures and the strategic direction of the functions they support.

This element of the profile, taken from the job family descriptor for this grade, provides a general understanding of the level of work and demands required.

Role characteristics

At this level job holders report to a Director and are responsible for the development and implementation of strategy relating to several functions within that service. Posts carry significant responsibilities for finance and a range of other non-financial assets and job holders will make autonomous decisions and lead the management of change throughout their area of influence within the service.

The knowledge and skills required

The advanced theoretical knowledge required to make appropriate judgements and decisions at this level is augmented by ongoing professional development and thorough understanding of external legislative and societal change. Also by a deeper understanding of the city council operational structures which both support and depend upon the job holder's actions and advice. Roles will be professional experts, providing expert professional leadership across a number of functions.

Thinking, planning and communication

Job holders will use their professional expertise to deal with highly complex, pressing issues including service level change initiatives and risk management. They will also look well ahead and take a long-term, strategic view of their project and service delivery objectives over several years into the future, shaping their service's composition, approach and operating procedures in accordance with wider goals mandated by the service directorate.

The information exchanged at this level will be routinely complex, contentious in nature and/or highly significant to the city council's reputation. Job holders will, however, have additional demands placed upon them by the need to persuade others to adopt courses of action they may not otherwise wish to take, based on evidence and reasoned argument. This will occur in written interactions but can also in face to face verbal exchanges where job holders will advocate the city council's position in response to opposing opinion in a formal or informal setting.

Decision making and innovation

The limitations to job holders' decision making will be only the broad policy and practice guidelines that exist at both a corporate and even national/professional level.

At this level of autonomy, job holders will be the final arbiter of many escalated technical and professional disputes and problems. They will report to a Director and will devise and implement strategic plans and policy in relation to several functional areas.

Areas of responsibility

With a diverse range of jobs being represented at this level, the precise blend of responsibilities for which the job holder is accountable will depend upon the service in which they operate.

Roles will focus on the needs of whole classes of people - whether external service users or partners and will be responsible for critical day to day decisions with legal and reputational dimensions and the development of directorate level policy and functional procedures.

In addition, such roles are likely to have very high levels of responsibility for such elements as finance (very substantial budget management), information assets (council-wide systems) or premises (of extremely high value and critical operational importance).

Roles will have full line management responsibility over several functional areas with differing specialties and employee profiles.

Impacts and demands

The combination of both tactical and strategic matters that job holders deal with means roles are inherently very complex, demanding of particularly lengthy periods of concentrated mental attention while also managing very high levels of work-related pressure from deadlines, interruptions or conflicting demands.

Tasks and duties will be generally carried out in a sedentary position but there will always be a requirement for standing and walking from time to time, and the occasional need to lift or carry items.

Duties of jobs at this level will not require job holders to develop and maintain working relationships with people who, through their circumstances or behaviour, place particular emotional demands on the job holder.

Job holders find themselves exposed to some disagreeable, unpleasant or hazardous working conditions. Particularly when the needs of their specialism require them to work on external sites exposed to the weather, in or around refuse and waste plant, close to particularly noisy machinery and in similar environments.

Other jobs, such as enforcement roles, may also see job holders exposed to verbal abuse and threatening environments. In all cases, job holders will minimise risk and conform to health and safety regulations to mitigate any negative effects of such exposure.