

Head of Service Children in Care, Care Leavers, Fostering and Adoption Grade 15

About the Service

Our ambition is that children unable to live with their families experience safe, nurturing, high quality care that meets individual needs and enables them to thrive. We act as strong corporate parents, ensuring children's needs, rights and experiences sit at the center of decisions and we recognise and invest in our foster carers, kinship carers and adopters, who provide family based care and stability. Having a sense of belonging is critical for our children and from day one, we focus on permanence through long term fostering, kinship, adoption, and reunification. We ensure purposeful preparation for adulthood is achieved with a stable home and the right support at the right time and we work to develop sustaining trusted adult networks for care leavers as we recognise this is critical to reduce isolation and provide continuity beyond statutory involvement.

About the Role

The Head of Service – Children in Care, Care Leavers, Fostering and Adoption provides strategic leadership and operational oversight across the full pathway: from entry to care and family based and residential placements through to all forms of permanence to preparation for adulthood and leaving care (including UASC). The role is accountable for compliant, safe, child centred services; robust sufficiency; performance and quality; and the continuous improvement of fostering, kinship, adoption, working closely with Together4Children and wider partners.

The post holder balances effective financial planning, monitoring, and control, with responsibility for managing significant placement and service budgets, delivering high quality, sustainable services. This includes balancing fiscal responsibility with the need to secure high quality placements, grow and retain a skilled foster carer and adopter workforce, and reduce reliance on external provision through a strong sufficiency and commissioning approach.

The role operates as a key system leader within Children and Families services, driving improvement through the Continuous Improvement Plan, managing risk, and acting as a strong corporate parent to some of the most vulnerable children and young people. The role contributes to wider directorate priorities and works collaboratively with senior leaders to ensure services are aligned, sustainable, and outcome focused.

A core responsibility of the role is to ensure full compliance with statutory and regulatory responsibilities relating to children in care, care leavers, fostering and adoption. This includes care planning, placement sufficiency, reviews, permanence planning, and care leaver entitlements oversight of recruitment, assessment, approval, supervision, and support of foster carers and adopters; permanence planning; matching; adoption support; and adherence to national minimum standards and regulations. The Head of Service maintains oversight of performance management, audit, and quality assurance arrangements, ensuring that practice is safe, timely, and child centred, and that learning from inspection, complaints, and feedback is embedded to drive continuous improvement.

The Head of Service plays a pivotal role in driving integrated working across health, education, police, housing, Together4Children, voluntary and community sector partners. Through strong partnerships and shared accountability, the role supports coordinated responses that improve safety, stability, and life chances for children. This includes resolving systemic barriers, influencing commissioning arrangements, and promoting collective ownership of outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

Reporting Relationships

Responsible to: Assistant Director Children in Care and Care Leavers

Responsible for: Service Manager – Children in Care, Service Manager – Care Leavers & UASC, Service Manager – Fostering (Recruitment, Assessment & Retention), Service Manager – Fostering (Supervision & Support / Supported Accommodation), Service Manager – Adoption & Permanency (working with Together4Children)

Key Accountabilities:

1. Strategic Leadership & Service Development

- Provide clear strategic direction and leadership across Children in Care, Care Leavers & UASC, Fostering and Adoption, aligned with organisational vision, values and outcomes.
- Lead development, implementation and evaluation of strategies and delivery plans including the Families First Programme, Sufficiency Strategy (incl. regional sufficiency), Corporate Parenting Strategy, and Regional Adoption Agency arrangements, ensuring safe, lawful and sustainable services.
- Change programs responding to legislation, inspection findings and emerging need—particularly around accommodation sufficiency, permanence, and preparation for adulthood.
- Creates a culture of innovation, learning and continuous improvement across the whole system of corporate parenting; lead, motivate and develop managers and staff with high-quality supervision, reflective practice and constructive challenge.
- Act as Responsible Individual for Fostering Services and Supported Accommodation.

2. Partnership & Collaborative Working

- Build and sustain effective partnerships with social care, health, education, housing, legal services, police, the Home Office, commissioning, VCS and Together4Children to deliver integrated support, remove barriers and improve outcomes
- Lead/attend multi-agency forums and operational groups addressing complex needs and improving stability, permanence and transition outcomes, including those for UASC.
- Represent the authority at local, regional and national forums, championing best practice and escalating systemic issues requiring external support or strategic resolution.
- Work with commissioning to identify gaps and shape provision for placements, supported accommodation, specialist support and adoption services
- As the strategic lead, establish a coordinated response and approach to systems which support all children in our care and Care Leavers by promoting a whole system approach in accordance with current legislation, statutory guidance and best practice.

3. Service Delivery & Performance Management

- Ensure delivery is evidence-based, outcome-focused and responsive to legislative change; use performance data and QA to inform decisions and service development
- Develop, monitor and report on performance frameworks, KPIs and QA processes to secure safe, timely and child-centered practice and continuous improvement across CIC, leaving care & UASC, fostering/kinship and adoption.
- Lead an outcomes-based performance model informed by audits, inspections, serious incidents/reviews and lived-experience feedback, feeding strategic needs analysis and service design.
- Maintain compliance with statutory and regulatory responsibilities: care planning, placement sufficiency, permanence, reviews, care leaver entitlements, UASC age assessment/transition interfaces, fostering and adoption regulations and National Minimum Standards
- Develop and implement service guidance, policies, and procedures to ensure effective, efficient and consistent intervention and support.

4. User Engagement & Co-production

- Embed meaningful participation with children in care, care leavers, UASC, foster/kinship carers and adopters in service design, delivery and evaluation.
- Champion the voice, rights and aspirations of children and young people—ensuring their experiences shape operational practice, improvement plans and wider Children & Families priorities.
- Provide the space and support to ensure that children, young people, parents, carers and families can inform, influence and shape the Children and Families agenda.

5. Resource & Project Management

- Operating within budget, manage resources to deliver services effectively and efficiently within financial constraints
- Develop and oversee plans to drive timely and successful delivery of change projects and transformation initiatives.
- Identify and mitigate risks, resolving issues to ensure successful outcomes.
- As part of the leadership of the Children's System work collaboratively to ensure that we deliver our vision, aspiration and outcomes. Working to create a culture of innovation, an environment of trust and a system where we challenge and support each other to drive improvement change and encourage learning.

6. Service specific accountabilities

- Provide strategic leadership of placement and accommodation sufficiency for all children in care, care leavers and UASC—including fostering, kinship, residential, supported accommodation and adoption matching—driving stability and timely permanence.
- Provide strategic oversight of transitions from care and the Local Offer for Care Leavers, ensuring young people are prepared emotionally, practically and financially for independence, with clear improvements in housing, EET, health and wellbeing.
- Lead the local authority's corporate parenting approach, including strategic leadership and delivery of the Corporate Parenting Panel, ensuring children and young people's voices and lived experiences directly inform design, decisions and improvement.

Person Specification

Qualifications/Professional membership

- Degree or equivalent level qualification.
- A qualified and registered Social Worker.
- A relevant professional/management qualification or evidence of substantial management training

Knowledge and Experience

- Substantial post qualification experience within children social care and managing teams within children's social care,
- Substantial supervisory and management experience and knowledge of relevant HR guidance and procedure.
- Experience of successfully leading, managing and motivating high performing services
- Substantial experience of managing investigations and complaints
- Knowledge, understanding and experience of working with relevant legislation policy and procedures of children in care, care leavers, UASC, fostering and adoption
- Detailed knowledge of National Minimum Standards and associated regulations in relation to Fostering, Kinship and Adoption
- Knowledge and experience in the discharge of the Role of Responsible Individual for Regulated Services.
- In-depth understanding of statutory frameworks, national agendas, and best practice for children in care, care leavers, fostering, kinship and adoption.
- Proven ability to embrace innovative practices and developments, lead change and project manage/ pilot new initiatives
- Ability to make sound judgements and hold risk appropriately based on analysis of the relevant facts in planned and unplanned circumstances.
- Proven track record of developing and implementing strategy and policy and the ability to convey a clear vision and provide strategic leadership.
- Proven ability to work collaboratively with internal and external partners, including multi-agency groups.
- Demonstrable financial management experience, including managing and monitoring staffing and procurement budgets.
- Ability to foster and champion innovation, leading to the successful delivery/commissioning of innovative best in class services, further enhancing the County Council's reputation.
- A thorough understanding of the current challenges facing local government generally,

and Staffordshire County Council in particular, coupled with financial and commercial awareness.

- Track record of delivering effective, high-quality services and driving continuous improvement.
- Experience in successfully developing and monitoring performance frameworks, quality assurance, and report.

Skills

- Proven leadership qualities and the ability to inspire, motivate, and manage teams towards successfully achieving organisational goals
- Effective inter-personal skills with proven ability to develop and sustain effective relationships; and foster positive culture
- Effective verbal and written communication skills with the ability to communicate complex information clearly to a variety of audiences
- Highly organised and analytical with a logical approach to problem solving and an ability to analyse complex information and situations to make effective evidence-based decisions
- Developed negotiating and influencing skills, able to build consensus and secure commitment from a wide range of stakeholders
- Interpersonal skills for building and sustaining effective relationships with staff, partners, and stakeholders.
- Ability to develop, monitor and report on performance frameworks and quality assurance processes
- Effective budget and resource management skills
- Ability to manage and implement change programmes and service improvements
- Evidence that you can advocate for the empowerment and development employees
- Evidence of and commitment to ongoing professional learning and development
- Flexible, autonomous, and able to manage competing priorities as part of a wider team.

****An Enhanced DBS will be needed for this post***

This post is designated as a casual car user.

The content of this Job Description and Person Specification will be reviewed on a regular basis.