



Role Profile

Head of Commissioning – Children's
People Commissioning

Role Profile: Head of Commissioning – Children’s	Role Profile Number: SBC_12757
Directorate: People Commissioning	Reporting to: Director of Commissioning - People
Grade: CFL 13	Date Prepared: September 2026

Our Values Our Values shape how we work for the people of Swindon. They guide how we make decisions, how we deliver services and how we work with our communities and partners. Our Values are: We SEE – people, not problems – and stay curious to understand their story. We HEAR – each other and the people we serve We CARE – about our colleagues, our residents and our community We ACT – with integrity, accountability and purpose We LEARN – from data, feedback and experience so we keep improving These five values describe the standards we hold ourselves to as a Council, and what residents and partners can expect from us. The Swindon Commitment The Swindon Commitment shows how we bring our Values to life every day, in every role, across all that we do. It turns our Values into practical promises between the Council, our colleagues and the people we serve so we can work together to deliver the best possible services and support. Created with colleagues from across the organisation, the Swindon Commitment sets out a shared understanding of how we work, lead and behave. Rooted in our five core values, it reflects how we listen to, include and respond to residents, communities and each other.  We See people, not problems – and stay curious to understand their story.  We Hear each other and the people we serve.  We Care about our colleagues, residents and community.  We Act with integrity, accountability and purpose.  We Learn from data, feedback and experience to keep improving.

Purpose:

The Head of Commissioning for Children's provides strategic leadership for the commissioning of children's social care and education services and the delivery of the council's statutory sufficiency duties. The postholder is accountable for delivering measurable impact and lasting improvements, ensuring that children, young people and families have access to high-quality, safe and effective support that delivers positive outcomes and value for money. The postholder leads the development of commissioning capability across Children's social care and education, embedding best practice and strengthening the service's ability to understand need, shape markets, design services and improve outcomes.

The postholder is responsible for developing a sustainable and diverse provider market, reducing reliance on high-cost and out-of-area provision, and ensuring sufficient local capacity across areas such as children's residential care, family-based care, supported accommodation and other commissioned services. The postholder uses intelligence about demand, cost, market performance, quality and outcomes to inform commissioning priorities and workloads, influence service design and identify opportunities for innovation, prevention and early intervention.

As a senior leader within the People Commissioning service, the Head of Commissioning for Children's works collaboratively across children's social care, housing, health and adult social care to develop integrated solutions that improve outcomes for children, young people and families, including care leavers and those transitioning to adulthood. This postholder is required to make significant contributions to the overall financial sustainability of the council.

Key responsibilities and accountabilities:

- Provide strategic leadership for the commissioning of children's social care and education services, ensuring commissioning activity delivers measurable improvements in outcomes, quality, sufficiency and value for money.
- Lead the development and delivery of commissioning strategies, plans and programmes that respond to current and future need, statutory requirements and corporate priorities.
- Lead market shaping and market stewardship activity to develop a sustainable, diverse and high-quality provider market that can meet local need and reduce reliance on high-cost and out-of-area provision.
- Ensure the Council fulfils its statutory sufficiency duties through effective analysis of demand, capacity, market trends and future population needs.

- Use intelligence relating to demand, cost, quality, performance and outcomes to inform commissioning priorities, investment decisions and service redesign.
- Proactively identify, influence and maximise local, regional and national opportunities that support market development, improved outcomes and more effective use of resources.
- Drive continuous improvement in commissioning practice across Children's Services, embedding evidence-based approaches, best practice and a culture of learning and innovation.
- Build strong strategic relationships with operational services, providers, health partners, education settings, regional commissioning networks and neighbouring authorities to improve service delivery and outcomes.
- Maintain an outward-looking approach, identifying and implementing learning, innovation and best practice from local, regional and national developments.
- Ensure Homefinding effectively match and negotiate best value placements.

Supplementary Accountabilities

- Ensure all commissioning and procurement activities comply with Contract Standing Orders, procurement legislation and financial delegations.
- Strengthen the Council's position in regulatory inspections, including Ofsted, SEND and children's social care inspections, by ensuring commissioning activity is evidence-based, outcome-focused and demonstrably effective.
- Lead the development, delivery, implementation and regular refresh of the Children's Sufficiency Strategy, ensuring it remains responsive to changing demand and market conditions.
- Work effectively as part of an integrated all-age commissioning function, identifying opportunities to align approaches, maximise efficiencies and improve outcomes across the life course.
- Represent the Council in regional and national commissioning forums, influencing policy, practice and market development.
- Ensure commissioning decisions appropriately balance quality, sufficiency, risk and affordability.
- Promote co-production and engagement with children, young people, families and partners to inform commissioning priorities and service design.
- Ensure robust governance, performance management and reporting arrangements are in place for commissioned services and commissioning programmes.

Managerial

- Provide effective leadership, management, supervision and professional development for colleagues within the Children's Commissioning Service, including Homefinding.
- Be accountable for the overall performance, delivery and continuous improvement of the Children's Commissioning Service, including individual, team and service objectives.
- Develop and maintain a high-performing commissioning function with the skills, knowledge and capability required to meet current and future service challenges.
- Foster a culture of accountability, collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement across the service.

- Set and oversee a multi-year commissioning work programme that shapes the market in order to fulfil the council's statutory sufficiency duties, maximise compliance with Contract Standing Orders and make significant contributions to the Council's financial sustainability.
- Lead the identification, development and delivery of savings proposals and service improvement initiatives. Includes making strategic investment recommendations.
- Ensure resources, budgets and staffing arrangements are deployed effectively to achieve agreed priorities and outcomes.
- Monitor performance and address underperformance within both commissioned services and the commissioning workforce.

Professional

- Provide strategic advice and assurance to senior leaders and elected members on commissioning matters, risks, opportunities and financial implications. Requires translating complex information into clear and actionable information.
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with senior leaders, elected members, regulators (e.g. OFSTED), external partners, providers, health organisations, education settings and regional local authority networks.
- Represent the Council at local, regional and national forums.
- Act as the Council's lead expert and professional advisor on children's social care and education commissioning, market shaping and sufficiency.
- Provide strategic leadership on complex commissioning issues.
- Lead the Council's approach to fulfilling its statutory sufficiency duties and provide assurance regarding delivery against these responsibilities.
- Maintain expert knowledge of relevant legislation, guidance, commissioning best practice, market developments and emerging sector challenges.
- Promote evidence-based decision making and ensure commissioning activity is informed by data, research, benchmarking and stakeholder intelligence.

Decision making:

- Determines commissioning priorities and resource allocation based on assessment of need, market intelligence and financial considerations.
- Makes decisions regarding market interventions to address sufficiency risks, quality concerns, service gaps and provider failure.
- Determines commissioning approaches, service models and procurement strategies for complex and high-value arrangements.
- Balances competing priorities relating to cost, quality, sufficiency, risk and outcomes, often where there is no straightforward solution.
- Makes recommendations to senior leaders and elected members on significant commissioning and procurement decisions.
- Exercises professional judgement in responding to changing market conditions, emerging risks and new legislative or policy requirements.
- Authorises commissioning plans, business cases, investment proposals and service redesign recommendations within delegated authority levels.

Creativity and innovation

- Develops innovative commissioning solutions to address sufficiency challenges, market instability, increasing demand and financial pressures.
- Identifies and implements new approaches to market shaping, provider engagement and service delivery that improve outcomes and value for money.
- Applies creative thinking to complex system-wide challenges, particularly where traditional approaches have not delivered sustainable results.
- Seeks and adapts learning from national best practice, research, innovation programmes and high-performing authorities.
- Explores alternative service models, partnership arrangements and investment approaches to improve quality, increase local provision and reduce reliance on high-cost placements.
- Encourages a culture of innovation, continuous learning and service improvement across Children's Services and the wider commissioning function.
- Uses data, insight and emerging technologies to improve commissioning intelligence, decision making and market oversight.

Job Scope

Number and types of jobs managed:	Directly c.6
Budget Holder:	Yes
Budget Value:	Oversee commissioned spend of c£50m p.a.
Asset Responsibility:	N/A

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Qualifications:	Essential or Desirable
1. Degree-level qualification or equivalent professional qualification, or significant relevant experience operating at a senior strategic level in commissioning, children's services, education, health, procurement or a related field.	1. E 2. E 3. D 4. D

2. Extensive experience (typically gained over 3 years or more) of directly commissioning children's social care and/or education services within a local authority, public sector or related commissioning environment. 3. Management or leadership qualification (e.g. ILM Level 5/7, Chartered Management Institute qualification, or equivalent). 4. Commissioning, procurement, project management or programme management qualification (e.g. MCIPS, PRINCE2, MSP, APM or equivalent).	
Knowledge and Experience:	
5. Significant experience of developing and delivering commissioning strategies that achieve measurable improvements in outcomes, quality and value for money. 6. Strong knowledge of the legislative, regulatory and policy framework relating to children's social care, education, commissioning, procurement and statutory sufficiency duties. 7. Proven experience of market shaping, provider engagement and market stewardship, including developing sustainable provision and reducing reliance on high-cost or out-of-area arrangements. 8. Experience of leading complex commissioning, investment and procurement decisions, balancing quality, sufficiency, risk, affordability and performance considerations. 9. Experience of leading and developing high-performing teams, building commissioning capability and driving continuous improvement across a commissioning function.	5. E 6. E 7. E 8. E 9. E
Aptitudes, Skills and Competencies:	
10. Ability to provide strategic leadership and clear direction in a complex and politically sensitive environment. 11. Excellent analytical skills with the ability to interpret data, market intelligence and financial information to inform evidence-based decision-making. 12. Strong influencing, negotiation and relationship management skills, with the ability to build credibility and collaborate effectively with senior leaders, elected members, partners, providers and regulators. 13. Ability to communicate complex information clearly and persuasively to a range of audiences, including senior leaders and elected members.	10. E 11. E 12. E 13. E 14. E 15. E

14. Highly developed strategic planning and problem-solving skills, with the ability to identify innovative solutions to complex sufficiency, market and service challenges. 15. Demonstrable ability to lead change, promote innovation and foster a culture of accountability, collaboration and continuous improvement.	
Special Conditions of Recruitment:	
16. Enhanced DBS Check	16. E

Other Key Features of the role

It should be noted that the duties and tasks associate with this post may change from time to time without altering their general character or the level of responsibility entailed. The above duties and activities associated with this job are neither exclusive nor exhaustive and the job holder may be called upon to carry out other such appropriate duties as may be required within the grading level of the job.

This is a politically restricted post in accordance with Section 2 (1) (b) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

