



Service Manager – Education Commissioning

Salary:	Band 13, £60,906 - £68,200 per annum, pro rata
Hours:	Full time 37 hours (with the possibility to consider part time 29.6 hours or more for the right candidate).
Contract:	Permanent
Directorate:	Children, Families and Education
Service:	Education
Line Manager:	Head of Sufficiency and Resources
Location:	Portsmouth Civic Offices, with option to work remotely 1-2 days per week.

Portsmouth City Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Every post is subject to PCC and Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership safer recruitment

This role requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at Standard/Enhanced level which will be required prior to any offer of employment and this post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

The role

The post-holder will provide strategic and operational leadership for education commissioning within Portsmouth City Council, ensuring statutory responsibilities are met and that high-quality, sustainable and value-for-money education provision is secured for children and young people.

The role has a particular focus on commissioning of placements for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This will include commissioning places at alternative provision, independent non-maintained and special schools, out of City special school placements, and packages of support for children who are being educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS). The post holder will play a critical role in improving the sufficiency, quality and long-term system sustainability of this provision. They will lead end-to-end commissioning activity and provide senior professional leadership across the education system.

This is a new role within Portsmouth, managing a small new team.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Commissioning

- Provide senior leadership for education commissioning, shaping and delivering commissioning strategies aligned to statutory duties, sufficiency planning and SEND priorities.
- Lead the full commissioning cycle, including needs analysis, market engagement, procurement, contracting, quality assurance and review.
- Translate complex strategic, financial and operational priorities into coherent and deliverable commissioning plans.

Market Development and System Sustainability

- Develop and influence local and regional education markets to improve capacity, resilience, quality and value for money.
- Reduce reliance on high-cost and out-of-area placements by strengthening local provision and responding to market failure where required.

Quality Assurance, Governance and Risk

- Design and implement robust quality assurance and performance management frameworks for commissioned education provision.
- Hold providers to account for performance, safeguarding and outcomes, taking decisive action where concerns arise.
- Identify, manage and mitigate strategic risks relating to statutory compliance, sufficiency, quality and financial sustainability.

Contracts, Procurement and Financial Accountability

- Oversee high-value contracts and commissioning decisions, exercising significant professional judgement within agreed governance and financial frameworks.
- Lead complex procurement and contracting activity in partnership with procurement, legal and finance colleagues.
- Ensure commissioning decisions demonstrate clear value for money and contribute to the council's financial sustainability.

Partnership and Leadership

- Build and maintain strong relationships with schools, trusts, providers, neighbouring authorities and regional partners.
- Provide authoritative professional advice to senior leaders on education commissioning risks, opportunities and system pressures.
- Represent the council at senior internal and external meetings and partnership forums.

Leadership and Management

- Lead, manage and develop staff within the Education Commissioning function, embedding a culture of accountability, continuous improvement and professional challenge.
- Promote inclusion, equality and safeguarding in all aspects of commissioning activity.

Who is the Person?



Person Specification

Knowledge

- Degree-level qualification or equivalent professional knowledge and experience.
- In-depth knowledge of education systems, including SEND and alternative provision.
- Strong understanding of public-sector commissioning, procurement and contract management.
- Knowledge of quality assurance, performance management and safeguarding requirements.

Experience

- Significant experience of strategic commissioning or service-level leadership within a complex public-sector environment.
- Experience of managing high-value contracts and budgets with organisational-level impact.
- Demonstrable experience of influencing senior stakeholders and leading system-wide change.
- Experience of balancing statutory duties, financial pressures and service quality.
- Direct experience of education, SEND or alternative provision commissioning. (Desirable)

Skills and Abilities

- Strong strategic, analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Ability to operate with autonomy and high levels of professional judgement.
- Excellent communication, influencing and negotiation skills.
- Ability to manage competing priorities and complex risk.

Values and Behaviours

- Strong commitment to inclusion, equality and improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Collaborative and relational leadership style, with the confidence to challenge constructively.
- Commitment to safeguarding, ethical practice and continuous professional development.

You will need to demonstrate that you have the Right to Work in the UK. No post will be offered without it.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)



Portsmouth City Council is the Data Controller of any personal information you provide when applying for a job. It will only be used in connection with the recruitment process and will not be kept for longer than necessary. For more detailed information you can access the Data Protection Privacy Notice on our careers portal.