

Head of Social Work.

£122,898 to £129,834

Closing Date: 18 March 2026

About the Service

The social work service provides social work and social care support for children and their families, for adults and older adults and justice services for young people and adults where those are needed.

Adult and older adults social work and social care services are delegated functions to West Lothian Integration Joint Board. Children and justice services fall within West Lothian Council governance arrangements. Social work services together with locally managed health services, form the Health and Social Care Partnership focused on the delivery of services to improve the wellbeing, safety and quality of life of people living in West Lothian, particularly those most vulnerable and at risk.

Children & Families

The Children and families service comprises a range of teams providing a continuum of support for children and their families. The primary function of the teams is to ensure that children, young people and their families can maximise their potential through the provision of additional support services, ensuring that children and young people are safe and supported as far as possible within their own family, their own family network and community. The children and families service provides supports that are holistic and focused on improving lives and outcomes for children, young people and families.

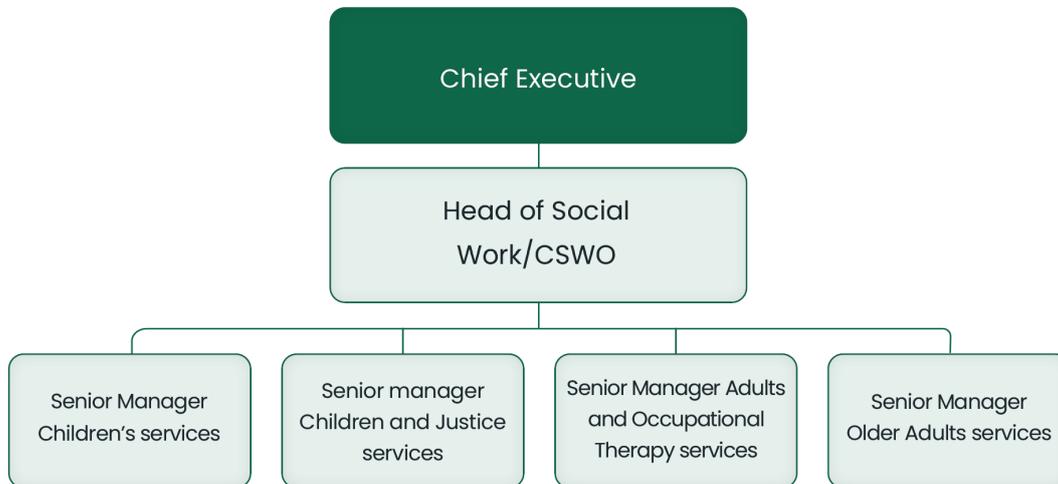
Adults and Older Adults services

Adult and older adults services comprise a range of social work and social care services provided for people with assessed care needs. A key service strategic driver is for service delivery to enable people to live as independently as possible and live at home or in a homely place as long as is possible. The crucial contribution of unpaid carers is recognized and the services works to promote, enable and sustain independence and social inclusion for supported individuals and for carers.

Criminal & Youth Justice Service

The justice service provides services statutorily required for the assessment, supervision and management of young people and adults who are in conflict with the law. The service is focused on the delivery of a whole systems approach supporting young people who are at risk of harm and conflict with the law. The service provides support to people to enable them to contribute positively to their communities and to ensure the strategic aims of reducing reoffending are achieved.

Service Structure



Purpose of job

To provide strategic and operational leadership, direction and general management control in the functions delivered by the Social Work service and to ensure that service-specific advice is provided as required to the Chief Executive, to elected members, the Depute Chief Executives and Integration Joint Board.

To ensure that the day-to-day management of service areas is effectively undertaken and that all service activities are effectively integrated and focused towards agreed council service and business objectives.

To contribute to the development of overall council policy through the Corporate Management Team.

As a member of the West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) senior management team, take responsibility for the functioning success of the team and the development of strategic planning and operational practice in West Lothian.

To undertake the role and duties of Chief Social Work Officer in line with national guidance.

Job scope

The Head of Social Work reports directly to the Depute Chief Executive (Health and Social Care Partnership) and is responsible for ensuring that effective management systems and controls are in place within the service area(s) to deliver agreed service outputs to the required quality.

As CSWO, the post holder reports directly to the Council Chief Executive.

There is a key requirement to contribute to the development of overall council policy in addition to providing the necessary leadership and management direction within service areas.

The Head of Social Work post provides a critical link between the operational and service delivery requirements of the council and the formulation and implementation of service and organisational strategy at Corporate Management Team level.

The Head of Social Work assumes significant budget, resource and managerial responsibilities as delegated by the Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive and council standing orders and holds key responsibilities for promoting and driving forward transformational change.

The postholder has direct responsibility for a budget of approximately £158 million and circa 859 FTE employees across the functional areas of Children and Families, Adult and Older Adult services and Children and Justice services.

The formulation and delivery of service plans and the development and support of employees through the Appraisal and Development Review process is a key requirement of the post. Supporting the workforce to be trauma informed and responsive is an ongoing requirement. The postholder will also promote a culture of continuous improvement.

Being responsible for operational effectiveness and service delivery is likely to bring the Head of Social Work into frequent contact with elected members, other senior managers and external government and other agencies. The post holder will also require to form, maintain and develop key internal partnerships to ensure that the other service areas within the Council have the opportunity to make their contribution to relevant strategic direction while recognising the primary responsibility of the Social Work service group. The Head of Social Work will require to maintain and develop key external partnerships.

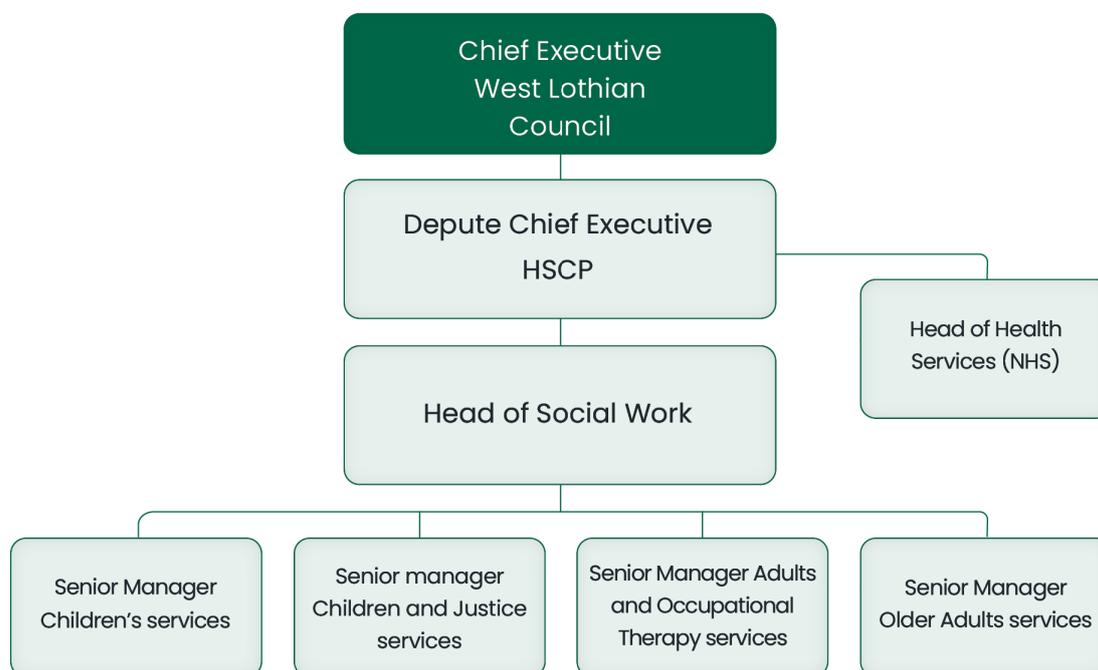
The post holder will have a significant impact on the success of the West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership and will have a considerable role to play in influencing its direction. The Head of Social Work will demonstrate a wide and comprehensive vision of the partnership working arrangements which will be called upon in delivering social work and social care services for the future. Allied to this will be the need for the Head of Service to seek opportunities to apply a range of digital solutions to meet existing and future service needs.

The Head of Service will ensure proper compliance with best value, service audit requirements and quality standards.

The post holder will require to ensure that senior managers and other officers to whom authority is delegated are held accountable for the effective general management, allocation and control of resources within their respective service areas.

The service areas covered have a high and sensitive political and public profile and form an important part of the council's and IJB's strategic aims.

Organisational Chart



The post holder is a member of the council's Corporate Management Team and is a non-voting member of West Lothian Integration Joint Board.

Principal accountabilities/key tasks

- The Head of Social Work is also appointed to be the Council's Chief Social Work Officer and will perform the statutory functions of the Council's Chief Social Work Officer. Additional details about the role and function of the CSWO are contained in Appendix 1.
- To carry out the statutory functions required of the Council by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (Care Inspectorate) and the Scottish Social Services Council
- To produce and update effective and meaningful plans and strategies within the service area, whether statutory or in line with Council, Integration Joint Board and Community Planning mechanisms. These will include the Children's Services Plan, the Corporate Parenting Plan, the Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan, the Community Justice Plan and the range of Public protection reporting and business plans including child and adult protection.
- To fully contribute to other key strategic planning requirements, e.g. West Lothian Community Plan, NHS Lothian's Strategic Plan
- Commissioning and contracting with external providers to provide a range of services for adults, older people and children.
- To represent the Council's interest in a wide range of critical partnership arrangements, including the Community Safety Board, the Integration Joint Board and Integration Strategic Planning Group and the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group.
- To advise council members and members of the Integration Joint Board to allow them to discharge their responsibilities.

- Establish, implement and scrutinise governance systems, processes, practices and monitoring arrangements to ensure compliance and management of risk across Social Work services.
- To manage service delivery (jointly with NHS Lothian) within the HSCP.
- To lead, on behalf of the council, the ongoing process of partnership working to ensure an effective means by which employees, service users, patients and communities can be involved in the delivery and planning of health and social care improvement.
- To ensure that policies are applied consistently and to ensure the council complies with statutory obligations.
- To lead the planning, implementation and evaluation of service redesign projects to improve efficiency and effectiveness of services, including promoting and consulting on proposals for organisation and service change to meet the needs of customers.
- To lead, manage and develop all staff, promoting excellent relationships within and between services and professional groups, ensuring staff can contribute effectively to the achievement of service objectives.
- To develop robust communication structures to ensure stakeholders are involved in and able to influence the planning, delivery and organisation of services.
- To be responsible for developing, publicising and ensuring compliance with the council's Occupational Health and Safety Policy in respect of the particular nature of the work activities of services provided.

Assignment and Work Review

Work is driven from Committees, Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive, the IJB, and HSCP.

The post holder reports to the Depute Chief Executive and is expected to operate autonomously at senior management level and to manage the services and resources to meet the agreed outcomes and targets.

Review of performance is undertaken through the agreement of performance objectives and individual appraisal by the Depute Chief Executive. The appraisal process is conducted on an annual basis with a 6-month review.

In respect of the role of Chief Social Work Officer, these responsibilities are legally distinct from the management duties allocated to the post of Head of Service through the contractual employment relationship.

Accountability

Responsibilities include:

- Risk Management
- Health and Safety
- Business Continuity and Resilience
- Staff Governance and Healthy Working Lives
- Winter Planning and Unscheduled Care

Control the utilisation of an agreed financial budget framework that clarifies accountability for budgets, provides management teams with the necessary financial resources to deliver to agreed objectives / targets and ensure that they deliver value for money and control expenditure on an ongoing basis.

Develop and manage the budget in line with financial instructions and plans, ensuring appropriate controls are in place to achieve good financial management and best use of resources.

Competencies – Essential

- Professional / relevant qualification in Social Work and registration with appropriate professional body.
- Educated to degree level or equivalent

Skills

- Proven leadership skills in a senior managerial post.
- Strong interpersonal, motivational and influencing skills.
- Effective management and professional skills and knowledge covering operations, policy development, corporate communications and finance.
- Proven ability to instigate and facilitate change in a form that promotes proactive visioning rather than reactive and delivers co-operative working towards innovative solutions.
- Proven ability to work corporately and contribute effectively to the senior management of the Council.
- High level of interpersonal and successful negotiation skills are required due to the substantial focus on partnership working.

Experience

- Significant management experience at a senior level in a related service area.
- Substantial experience in people and resource management in a complex organisational structure.
- Significant experience of leading large-scale projects and modernisation schemes.
- Substantial experience in managing and monitoring budgets.
- Evidence of sound financial management and commercial awareness with the ability to interpret and understand complex financial and budgetary information.
- Experience of dealing with elected members and senior managers at policy/strategic level
- Experience of partnership working at a senior level

Competencies – Desirable

Qualifications/Training

- Qualification in Management at degree/professional level
- Certificate in Child Protection

Experience

- Significant in-depth experience of a senior management post at the same level in a large, complex local authority

Other Essential Information

Prior to any offer of appointment, the council will undertake a PVG membership check.

The post is politically restricted in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Review

As the Council's management structure will continue to develop and meet new requirements, the post holder is expected to operate flexibly within this remit. If necessary, the post holder may be required to be responsible for a different range of service areas in the future.

Role Profile: Head of Service

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The Head of Service role provides a key link with Depute Chief Executives in ensuring that strategic and corporate objectives are effectively coordinated and implemented across all service areas.

The role requires the postholder to work with and support Depute Chief Executives in providing the necessary vision, leadership and strategic direction to enable services to formulate and implement relevant and effective policies.

Whilst Heads of Service have specific responsibility for the management and leadership of a portfolio of service areas, they have an overriding corporate responsibility to ensure that all service activities and actions comply with and support council strategic objectives and standards.

The role profile sets out *key result areas* - the essential leadership and management performance outcomes required - what you need to do well in your role as a leader and manager to perform effectively.

Key Result Areas

Managing Performance

Are key targets being achieved and is performance being effectively managed?

Focuses on:

- Regular reviews of performance with appropriate feedback, and a drive for continuous improvement.
- Systematic monitoring and review of customer service, performance measures and indicators.
- Effective implementation and monitoring of governance and efficiency measures.
- Systematic review and monitoring of performance related to service and corporate outcomes.

Developing Service and Workforce Capacity

What is being done to continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of service provision and to ensure that managers and employees are fully trained and capable?

Focuses on:

- Continuous improvement, customer service quality, assessing customer requirements, responding to customer feedback, ensuring constant customer focus.
- Enabling managers and teams to successfully cope with change and to take responsibility for problem solving and continuous improvement.
- Planned approach to employee development and succession planning.
- Looking ahead at the kinds of results that will typically be required of managers and teams and ensuring that development activity is targeted appropriately.

Budget Management

Are financial targets being met and is effective monitoring in place?

Focuses on:

- Achievement of agreed budgets and financial targets as a core senior management responsibility.
- Effective governance, communication, monitoring and management of financial procedures and controls.
- Clear individual accountability for financial/budgetary outcomes at all levels

Working Together

What customer service improvements and outcomes are being achieved through collaborative and partnership working?

Focuses on:

Effective collaboration with external and internal partners/customers and the benefits for customer service and performance/effectiveness.

Development of partnership and collaborative working to foster cross-council and service collaboration.

Emergency and Business Continuity Planning

Are effective contingency provisions in place in accordance with corporate requirements?

Focuses on:

- Effective integration and co-ordination of service emergency contingency plans.
- Contingency plans regularly rehearsed and effectively communicated to all levels of the workforce.

Core Competencies and Behaviours

What's expected of you and how you're expected to do it

Leading

Means: Taking responsibility for setting the direction of travel for the service; directing, guiding and inspiring others to achieve success for the service and the council; creating a shared sense of direction; delivering outcomes in ways consistent with the council's values and strategies.

Core Behaviours:

- Communicate a clear and positive vision for the service and get other people's committed involvement and support
- Create improved service capacity through integrated working, effective delegation and performance management
- Act in ways that reflect the values of the council and inspire others to do the same
- Champion a culture of high performance and improvement within the service
- Champion healthy working lives

Motivating and Supporting People

Means: Building a supportive and productive relationship with managers and employees to achieve business outcomes; focusing on achieving results through others; making the best use of the skills, knowledge and capabilities of others

Core Behaviours:

- Delegate effectively and enable and empower others to broaden their experience and capacity
- Work actively to improve and maintain employee morale and relations across the service
- Create opportunities to develop management and leadership capacity at all levels in the service
- Recognise success and ensure positive individual and team feedback
- Promote the benefits of diversity and challenge discrimination, prejudice and bias

Communicating and Influencing

Means: Acting as a visible and positive driver for change and improvement; building productive internal and external relationships to gain support and buy-in for service and council objectives; actively contributing to corporate and strategic decision-making; championing the goals and values of the council

Core Behaviours:

- Use persuasion and long-term relationship building to win support for service and council objectives
- Earn the respect and confidence of others through supportive, fair and consistent behaviour
- Promote a culture that encourages two-way discussion where information is shared at all levels
- Focus on employee engagement throughout the service
- Manage the political interface positively and effectively

Working Together

Means: Actively seeking to break down barriers to cross functional service and team working; encouraging people to work towards shared outcomes and aims; building on service interdependencies to achieve common goals; utilising the different skills and expertise from across the service and the council.

Core Behaviours:

- Create opportunities for collaborative working
- Use cross service/team discussion and dialogue to develop new ideas
- Use partnership working to maximise added value
- Use the diversity within services/teams to optimise customer outcomes
- Promote a culture that values quality improvement, effort and initiative

Managing Change and Problem Solving

Means: Anticipating potential challenges that may impact on service/council outcomes and performance; taking action to resolve problems and potential conflict; developing business focused strategies and innovative approaches.

Core Behaviours:

- Plan change programmes well in advance and communicate and consult effectively with all relevant stakeholders
- Anticipate the likely impact of change and develop contingency plans
- Encourage an open atmosphere and exchange of ideas when formulating change programmes and looking for solutions
- Monitor the progress and outcomes of change programmes and review their effectiveness
- Anticipate possible political reactions to change and manage expectations accordingly

Delivering Effective Outcomes

Means Focusing on strategic service planning and business outcomes; delivering, measuring and improving service quality and effectiveness for customers and stakeholders; ensuring that services are designed and delivered to have a lasting and sustainable positive impact on the quality of life of people living in West Lothian

Core Behaviours:

- Set clear direction for services to support council priorities and achieve corporate outcomes
- Integrate service planning with council strategic objectives
- Ensure that service links with council priorities are communicated and understood at all levels
- Seek customer and stakeholder views and use feedback to improve service quality and effectiveness
- Develop flexible structures and roles with a clear line of sight to the customer