

Commissioning Lead

Help shape the future of children's care, regional sufficiency and collaborative commissioning across the East Midlands.

Advertised: 14th August 2026

Closing date: 27th September 2026



Welcome

The East Midlands is creating one of the country's new [Regional Care Co-operatives \(RCCs\)](#): a major public sector reform programme designed to improve outcomes for children, strengthen regional sufficiency and support collaborative improvement across children's care.

Covering all ten upper-tier local authorities across the East Midlands, the RCC will bring together regional commissioning, sufficiency planning, fostering development, market engagement, data and improvement activity through a powerful new collaborative model.

This is not simply another programme. It is a unique opportunity to help establish a new regional infrastructure for children's care: ambitious, practical, evidence-led and deeply rooted in partnership working across local government, health, youth justice, policing and the voluntary sector.

As the East Midlands RCC is established, you will play an important role in bringing partners together around this shared ambition. Working as part of the founding RCC team, you will help build the relationships, culture and foundations needed to create lasting change across the region. We are looking for people who can inspire collaboration, build trust across complex systems and keep the voices of children, young people and carers at the heart of everything they do. Most important is your belief in what this programme can achieve.

We hope this pack gives you a sense of the opportunity ahead and the difference this role can make. We look forward to hearing from you.

East Midlands Directors of Children's Services



Role Overview

Job Title	Commissioning Lead
Salary & benefits	£75,000 - £85,000 a year, 27 days annual leave plus bank holidays, generous pension scheme, hybrid working arrangements. Secondment arrangements may differ.
Start date	November 2026
Contract type	Fixed-term contract or secondment opportunity until 31 st March 2028, with continuation subject to funding and approval. Any secondment arrangement will be subject to agreement with the successful candidate's current employer.
Basis	Full time (37.5 hours)
Employment location	The role will be based in Leicester, with regular travel across the East Midlands.
Job category	Leadership, children's social care and commissioning, sufficiency, market shaping and improvement, programme management.
Host organisation	RCC roles will be hosted by SDSA Leicester on behalf of the East Midlands local authorities.
Key responsibilities	Lead the development of a more intelligent, collaborative regional commissioning approach across the East Midlands, working with local authorities, providers and partners to influence markets, strengthen sufficiency, develop regional commissioning solutions and improve outcomes for children and young people.



Regional Collaboration

The East Midlands already has a strong culture of collaboration through its Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance (RIIA), long-established regional commissioning networks, one established regional fostering hub and strong collaboration between local authority fostering services across the wider region. The RCC will work alongside the established Foster for East Midlands Councils (FFEMC) partnership and support wider collaboration between local authority fostering services across the region by providing a natural strategic framework for continuing collaboration, shared learning and alignment.

The RCC will build on this mature foundation to create a genuinely influential regional platform for change.

East Midlands RIIA

The East Midlands Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance (RIIA) has become one of the strongest examples of sustained regional collaboration nationally. Its recent Impact Evaluation demonstrated:

- strong regional trust
- mature peer support
- influential leadership networks
- innovation across workforce, SEND, commissioning and social care reform
- tangible impact on improvement capacity across the region

The RCC will work closely alongside the RIIA, benefiting from established Heads of Service networks, commissioning collaboration, peer challenge infrastructure, workforce development and a mature culture of collective problem-solving.

About SDSA

The RCC Core Team will be hosted by [SDSA](#), the East Midlands' long-established business support partner.

SDSA is a not-for-profit organisation with a strong track record of supporting education, children's services and regional collaboration since 2005. It provides programme infrastructure, commissioning support and partnership coordination across the region and already works extensively with the East Midlands Directors of Children's Services (EMDCS) and RIIA.

Hosting the RCC within SDSA provides stability, agility, established resources and systems, regional connectivity and the ability to mobilise quickly. The core office base for this post will be at the SDSA office in Leicester City Centre, with regular in-person collaboration expected, alongside flexible and hybrid working arrangements.



About the role

The RCC Commissioning Lead will lead the development and delivery of the East Midlands Regional Care Cooperative's commissioning and sufficiency activity.

Sitting at the heart of the RCC's ambition to reshape regional sufficiency, the postholder will help reduce reliance on high-cost, unstable and distant placements by supporting local authorities to understand demand, influence provider markets and commission more effectively together.

The role combines strategic commissioning, market understanding, data and intelligence, provider engagement and partnership leadership. Working closely with the RCC Director, local authority commissioning leads and regional partners, the postholder will translate regional ambition into practical commissioning activity that improves outcomes, stability and value for money.

This is an opportunity to help redesign how the region understands demand, develops provision and responds to one of the biggest challenges facing children's services nationally.

Experience and Background

We are open to candidates from a range of professional backgrounds and recognise that exceptional leaders do not always emerge through conventional career pathways. Successful candidates are likely to be able to demonstrate significant leadership experience within children's services, public services, commissioning, partnership environments or similarly complex systems.

What matters most is your ability to work across systems, build relationships, inspire confidence and help turn regional ambition into practical improvement for children and families.

Key Candidate Attributes

- Strong strategic commissioning instincts
- Curiosity about markets, sufficiency and innovation
- Ability to work collaboratively across organisational boundaries
- Confidence using data and intelligence to shape decisions
- Strong influencing and partnership-building skills
- Creativity and willingness to challenge traditional approaches
- Understanding of placement sufficiency pressures
- Ability to balance ambition with pragmatism
- Enthusiasm for regional collaboration and system leadership



Role Description

▶ Regional sufficiency and strategy

- Lead the Regional Sufficiency Strategy and turn data and intelligence into clear priorities.
- Identify where regional commissioning can add value, particularly for low-incidence, high-cost and complex needs.
- Promote needs-led, outcomes-focused and ethical commissioning.

▶ Market shaping and provider engagement

- Build open, constructive relationships with fostering, residential and specialist providers.
- Coordinate regional provider engagement and use market intelligence to identify risks, gaps and opportunities.
- Support a more diverse, sustainable and responsive provider market.

▶ Collaborative commissioning and procurement

- Develop joint commissioning approaches across the ten East Midlands local authorities.
- Support regional frameworks, procurement activity and other collaborative commercial models.
- Work with procurement, legal, finance and contract colleagues to ensure compliance, value and deliverability.

▶ Partnerships, delivery and improvement

- Build trusted relationships with local authority commissioning and sufficiency leads and wider partners.
- Use clear measures to track progress, impact and benefits through RCC governance.
- Ensure children, young people, families, carers and practitioners help shape commissioning activity.



Person Specification

Qualifications and professional development	Essential (E) Desirable (D)
Degree-level qualification, relevant professional qualification or equivalent experience.	E
Postgraduate or recognised commissioning, procurement or commercial qualification.	D
Strategic commissioning experience	
Significant experience of commissioning within children's services, local government or another complex public-service environment.	E
Experience of developing commissioning strategies, sufficiency plans or service development priorities. Experience of developing commissioning strategies, sufficiency plans or service development priorities.	E
Ability to move from strategic analysis to practical implementation.	E
Direct experience of children's social care commissioning, fostering, residential care or specialist provision.	D
Experience of regional, sub-regional or multi-authority commissioning.	D
Sufficiency and market knowledge	
Strong understanding of placement sufficiency pressures, including demand, cost, quality, stability and distance from home.	E
Understanding of provider markets, market shaping, cost drivers and value for money.	E
Experience of commissioning low-incidence, high-cost or complex provision.	D
Knowledge of the East Midlands children's services landscape.	D
Procurement and commercial skills	
Experience of working with procurement, legal, finance and contract management colleagues.	E
Understanding of commissioning frameworks, provider engagement, negotiation and commercial decision-making.	E
Experience of developing frameworks, dynamic purchasing systems, block or soft-block arrangements, pooled budgets or joint commissioning models.	D
Data and intelligence	
Confidence using data, market intelligence, performance information and financial analysis to inform commissioning decisions.	E
Ability to identify trends, risks, gaps and opportunities and communicate these clearly to others.	E
Experience of developing shared datasets, demand forecasts, dashboards, benchmarking tools or regional market position statements.	D
Partnership working and influence	
Proven ability to work collaboratively across organisational and professional boundaries.	E
Strong influencing, negotiation, facilitation and relationship-building skills.	E
Ability to build trust and achieve progress without direct authority.	E
Experience of working with senior leaders, providers, health partners, national bodies or regional partnerships	D
Delivery and personal impact	
Strategic, curious and solutions-focused, with the ability to balance ambition with pragmatism.	E
Organised and able to manage competing priorities, dependencies and deadlines.	E
Experience of supporting organisational change, service redesign or the mobilisation of a new programme or function.	D
Values and behaviours	
Strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people.	E
Commitment to ethical commissioning, transparency, equality, diversity, inclusion and responsible use of public resources.	E



Application process

Please apply by submitting the following three documents to jobs@sdsa.net:

- 1. CV** - including an explanation of any gaps in employment.
- 2. Supporting statement** - a maximum of two sides of A4 demonstrating how your knowledge, skills and experience meet the requirements set out in the application pack.
- 3. Application form** - a short form which captures your contact details, references and equal opportunities information. The form is available to [download here](#).

Interview process

Applicants who are shortlisted will be invited to take part in a selection process which will likely comprise of a formal interview, presentation and task. We will provide further information and guidance about the process in advance.

Interviews will be held at the SDSA Office in Leicester City Centre.

Questions

We welcome informal enquiries about the role. If you would like to discuss the opportunity in more detail or have any questions, please email jobs@sdsa.net outlining the nature of your query. We will then ensure that the most appropriate member of our team gets in touch with you.



Email applications to:
jobs@sdsa.net



Closing date for applications:
Sunday 27th September at 10pm



Successful applicants contacted:
By Friday 2nd October



Interviews held:
Week commencing 5th October



All applications will be acknowledged:
Via email, within 48 hours of receipt.

