



One minute guide

Executive Member for Children's Social Care & Health Partnerships

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Who is it?

Leeds has 99 Councillors in total, split across the 33 wards in the city. After local elections, the ruling administration (currently Labour in Leeds) selects a Cabinet of Councillors, each of whom takes a political lead role for one of the Council's main areas of responsibility. One of these areas of responsibility is Children and Families.

Children and Families services are overseen by the Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships, Councillor Fiona Venner. Councillor Venner has held responsibility for Children and Families since 2019 and took on the additional responsibility of Health Partnerships in 2021.

Day to day responsibility for learning, including schools and Education, Health and Care Plans, has been delegated separately on the Council's Executive Board and has been held by Councillor Jonathan Pryor since 2019. Councillor Pryor is currently Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education.

Why do we have an Executive Member for Children's Services?

The statutory responsibilities of the Executive Member for Children's Services are set out in [section 18\(2\) of the Children Act 2004](#). For statutory purposes, a single elected member must hold responsibility relating to both education and social care services. This is currently held by Councillor Fiona Venner. This covers the political leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority children's services, and ensuring the needs of all children, including the most disadvantaged are met. The Executive member must have regard for the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) by ensuring that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services.

What does the role involve?

There are five specific areas where the Executive Member is required to provide political leadership:

- Leadership and partnership;
- Safeguarding;
- Vulnerable children and young people;
- Fair access to services; and
- Educational excellence.

In addition, in Leeds, the Executive Member is the 'voice and face' of children's services at the political meetings the council holds, such as Executive Board, Full Council, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board; she also chairs the Children and Families Trust Board. The Executive Member also acts as a spokesperson on children's services issues and speaks at events relating to children and young people. As such, it is very important that the Executive Member has a good overview of the work taking place across the service, including any sensitive or serious issues that arise.

Who are the key contacts?

Political responsibility for the children's services agenda is a very broad role, so the Executive Member in Leeds receives a range of support to carry out the role effectively.

Councillor Venner works closely with Councillor Pryor, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education, who leads on education. Councillor Venner is also supported by Cllr Andrew Scopes, as the Lead Member for Child Friendly Leeds and the chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Councillor Venner regularly meets with the Director of Children's Services, Julie Longworth, and the Children's Services Senior Leadership Team. This helps the Executive Member to stay informed about issues across services. Timely briefings on other specific issues within the remit are provided by other officers.

Want to know more?

The Executive Member always welcomes information about positive activities and developments across the service and opportunities to get 'out and about' to see work in action.

If you would like to invite Councillor Venner to see a setting or project, contact Councillor Venner's office on 0113 3789006 in the first instance for advice about how best to do this. For education, contact Councillor Pryor's office on 0113 3789007.

Equally, the Executive Members need to be kept informed about any significant issues that arise across the service; if you think a matter may need to be escalated to this level, you should discuss this with your Head of Service.