



One minute guide

Executive Member for Children and Families

No. 6, October 2025

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 and Families, Councillor Helen Hayden. Councillor Hayden has held responsibility for Children and Families since 2024.

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 Helen Hayden. 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. 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 Hayden is supported by a Deputy, Councillor Eleanor Thomson. She is also supported by Councillor Andrew Scopes, as the Lead Member for Child Friendly Leeds.

Councillor Hayden 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.

Further information

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 Hayden to see a setting or project, contact Councillor Hayden's office on 0113 378 3922 in the first instance for advice about how best to do this.