



Candidate pack
**DIRECTOR OF
EDUCATION AND
EARLY YEARS**
of Oldham Council



Oldham
Council

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Welcome from the Leader of the Council Cllr Arooj Shah

Leading this borough is personal to me.

Oldham is and always will be my home and my life. That's why I'm committed to ensuring that the services our residents rely on must be the best, because my family and I experience them every day.

Oldham Council is on a transformative path to become more resident-focused and ready for the future. Our children's services are the fastest improving in the country and are now graded "Good" by Ofsted. We have a new corporate plan with three missions to build a better Oldham: Happier Healthier Lives, Great Place to Live and Green and Growing. This plan won't just sit on the shelf - we'll make sure it acts as our roadmap to a better future.

Our relationships with government and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority mean we can be bold and ambitious for our borough and our residents. For too long Councils have been forced to salami slice budgets year-on-year to meet growing demand for services, but we are committed to making sure Oldham is not left behind.

Oldham is a wonderful place.

We're right in the middle of the most ambitious town centre regeneration where We've entered into a 15-year partnership with award-winning placemakers MUSE to deliver a brand new neighbourhood with 2,000 homes and a six-acre park running through the town centre.

All this work is because we know that our residents deserve better. We're committed to investing in our people and places to create jobs and opportunities and drive forward our vision for a fairer local economy.

Under the fantastic leadership of our Chief Executive, Shelley Kipling, we are now looking for several senior leaders to join our management team to help us shape the future of the borough.

Thank you for your interest in this crucial role.



About Oldham

On the edge of stunning Pennine landscapes, yet only a short tram journey from Manchester city centre, Oldham is a fantastic place to live, work and enjoy.

Ours is a borough of contrasts. A quarter of Oldham lies within the spectacular Peak District National Park, with picturesque Saddleworth villages offering the best of rural life. Meanwhile, our town centre's dramatic transformation will create new homes, new shops, new jobs, new culture and a new sense of optimism and hope in what is Greater Manchester's most ambitious town centre transformation programme.

The Industrial Revolution saw Oldham transform from a small Pennine settlement into one of the leading industrial bases in the country, and that strong manufacturing heritage continues to this day – though industries such as engineering and food production have taken over where the cotton trade once thrived.

We're proud to have one of the most diverse populations in the country, with around 150 different languages spoken by our community. Our growing Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities make up more than a fifth of our residents, while our fastest-growing demographic is in the 'white other' category, a group primarily made up of those of Polish and Romanian heritage. This is a place where people from all cultures play, learn and work together.

We know our borough is not without its challenges, but we're working hard to overcome them. Unemployment levels are high, and deprivation and inequality has increased. That's why we have a vision and a plan for our people and our place that matches the ambition we have for Oldham. Now we need to secure several transformational leaders across the organisation to help shape Oldham into a fairer and more equitable place for all our people. But we are ambitious for our people and our place. Together, we will continue to shape Oldham into a fairer and more equitable place for all our people.

Oldham's time is now - **we'd love you to join us.**



Living and working in Oldham

Oldham offers a mixture of urban and rural life unlike almost anywhere else in the UK.

Perfectly positioned on the edge of Manchester, with easy access to Manchester city centre and surrounding attractions, we're also just a short journey from fantastic walking, climbing and biking opportunities in the Peak District national park, as well as popular tourist hotspots on both sides of the Pennines.

Our borough is teeming with affordable properties, excellent schools (80% are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted) and super-connected transport links.

Direct road links from the M60 and M62 make driving to work an easy option for many. However, public transport links are also fast and easy; with a direct Metrolink line into Manchester city centre, and bus routes across Greater Manchester and beyond. Meanwhile, Manchester Airport is easily accessible for international travel.

Oldham's Town Centre Investment Plan and wider regeneration plans are turning our vision of Creating a Better Place into a reality with a new shopping, leisure and entertainment complex.

Spindles redevelopment – the town square shopping centre is being redeveloped to create modern, vibrant workspaces and civic offices, as well as bringing our historic Tommyfield Market into the building in a new purpose-built area. This redevelopment will transform the town centre and complement the recent developments in Parliament Square which is home to the ODEON Cinema and several popular places to eat and drink.



Why work for us?

It's an exciting time to join us here in Oldham as we build a fairer, more inclusive borough that works for everyone.

We've got an ambitious strategy which will create new jobs, new homes, and top-quality new public spaces for all our communities to enjoy. At the centre of those proposals is our new-look town centre. We've recently moved our Civic Centre teams into brand new offices in the Spindles shopping centre – freeing the space up for development and brand new homes. We have also, together with social enterprise Upturn opened The Hive, a coworking space to support new business in Oldham - creating opportunities for economic growth and innovation.

But while we've got big plans to continue building on our achievements, we're dedicated to delivering the very best public services Oldhamers need and deserve. That means getting the basics right – cleaning the streets, collecting waste and looking after our environment – while also ensuring that people get all the help and support they need, particularly the most vulnerable.

By working in partnership with our communities, listening to what they have to say, and taking action, we will keep improving our services to be the very best they can be. We're committed to reducing inequalities, tackling poverty, and ensuring everyone can fulfil their potential – whichever of our wards they're born in.

We also know we won't succeed in isolation.

We work closely with the other nine local authorities in Greater Manchester as part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, driving forward joint ambitions for health, wellbeing, work and jobs, housing, transport, skills, training and economic growth for almost three million residents across our region.

Our priorities, values and behaviours.

Our four pillars of change

These pillars represent our four main focus areas to deliver the plan. They will be essential for us to transform words on a page into a reality which will bring about real change for Oldhamers, and ensure that Oldham is an exemplar for local government - despite the financial challenges.

Efficiency and value for money

We're committed to making the best use of our resources throughout the Council.

Capacity building

We will build strong infrastructure to meet our needs now and in the future.

Digital

We will use digital tools to improve services and make our organisation more efficient.

Prevention & early help

We will actively work to reduce the need for our services by focusing on prevention and early support.

Our priorities

The corporate plan shows how we'll build a future where Oldham is recognised for its ambition, inclusiveness, and strength by focusing on three key missions:

Healthier Happier Lives

Great Place to Live

Green and Growing

By fostering innovation, investing in people, and supporting our communities, we'll ensure Oldham remains a place where everyone can thrive. With strong leadership, commitment to our values, and ongoing improvement, we're ready to adapt to the changes in local government.

[↓ DOWNLOAD HERE](#)



Our values and behaviours

In an ever-changing environment, where strategies must remain flexible and responsive, our cooperative ambition drives us forward, guided by a core set of values and behaviours. These principles form the foundation of Oldham Council's approach, ensuring that we stay true to our core purpose and direction.



Proud

We take pride not only in what we deliver for the residents of Oldham but also in how we deliver it.



Ambitious

We recognise the challenges we face and are committed to setting high aspirations to overcome them, with determination and focus.



Together

We believe in shared solutions, working across sectors and with our communities to achieve common goals and deliver the quality services Oldham deserves.

Our values – Proud, Ambitious, Together – define who we are and how we operate. They shape our culture, inform our decisions, and inspire us to deliver on our commitments to the people of Oldham. They are the standards we hold ourselves to, day in and day out. Alongside these values, a set of key behaviours guides how we work, ensuring consistency and focus across all areas of the Council.



Working together to achieve the best for our people and place, we demonstrate these five key behaviours at all times.

- 1** Working with a resident focus
- 2** Supporting local leaders
- 3** Committed to the borough – we're very proud to work for Oldham and we want you to be too
- 4** Taking ownership and driving change – we need to anticipate the needs of residents, look for improvements in the way we support them and think about how we could do so more effectively.
- 5** Delivering high performance – we set clear targets and look to be efficient in everything we do. We want team members to challenge, look to improve existing ways of working and take responsibility for their personal development.

Our next Director of Education and Early Years

Salary (£104,337– £115,105)

As Director of Education and Early Years and a member of the senior leadership team, contribute to and support the development, co-ordination and implementation of corporate strategies and policy that will ensure achievement of the co-operative ambitions of the Council.

Be responsible for the design and delivery of aspects of the Council's transformation programme and provide strong leadership for cooperative behaviours across all portfolio responsibilities.

Provide and recommend strategic direction on all matters within the post holders own portfolio of responsibility to ensure the achievement of the Council's aims and objectives and effective service delivery.

Benefits and rewards

- A variety of flexible working options
- Access to the workforce wellbeing offer to support mental health, physical health and lifestyle behaviours
- Staff discount scheme
- Salary sacrifice schemes including Cycle to Work
- Reward and Recognition schemes including the Annual Staff Awards and Long Service Awards
- A variety of learning and development opportunities to help you develop in your current or future roles
- Opportunity to take volunteering days to support voluntary, community and charitable groups in Oldham.

Role Specific Accountabilities

Provide strategic leadership for all Education and Early Years services, ensuring statutory duties are fully met and that strategies, policies and delivery models reflect the ambitions of the Council's Cooperative Borough objectives.

Lead the Council's relationship with schools, academies, and early years providers, fostering strong and collaborative partnerships to raise standards, improve attainment and progress, and narrow achievement gaps for children and young people, particularly for those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Drive continuous improvement in school performance by leading the borough's School Improvement Strategy, ensuring the right balance of challenge and support, and promoting a strong culture of self-improving school-led partnerships.

Oversee school place planning and sufficiency, ensuring that forecasting, capital investment, and admissions planning are effectively aligned to demographic trends, development growth, and statutory responsibilities, delivering sufficient high-quality school and early years places across the borough.

Lead the Council's statutory responsibilities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring inclusive provision, timely Education, Health and Care (EHC) planning, effective commissioning and transport arrangements, and strong collaboration with families, schools and partners in line with the SEND Code of Practice.

Champion educational inclusion across Oldham, leading work to improve attendance, reduce exclusions, and promote engagement and achievement for all learners, including Looked After Children and those at risk of missing education or disengaging from learning.

Work with the Director of Growth and wider partners to align the borough's education, skills and employment system with the needs of the local labour market and Greater Manchester economy, promoting progression pathways, apprenticeships, and lifelong learning that prepare young people for future success.

Principal Accountabilities

Strategic Leadership

To contribute to corporate leadership across the business as part of the senior leadership team, delivering the corporate strategic plan; setting the agenda across portfolios through strong leadership, being a change advocate, forward planning, management and delivery against available, financial and people resources.

With vision and focus, lead the development and delivery of robust strategies and establish business and political priorities, which support the objectives and ambitions of the council ensuring that the post holders service(s) contribute to the cooperative ambitions.

To lead a range of services, projects and initiatives that benefit the organisation and as appropriate our communities, focusing resources through the effective redesign of services on preventative measures to reduce demand and promote self-serve.

Performance

To deliver high performance by establishing clear expectations and standards in line with the Council's performance management requirements; monitoring and increasing productivity and reporting on achievement, ensuring resident focussed services are delivered effectively and efficiently to the highest standards; including financial, risk, people and change management.

To ensure performance management information is available and used to inform the Council's budgetary review process.

Ensure through strong leadership that projects and initiatives are delivered on time to a high standard, driving efficiencies to achieve more with less, maximising budget availability and achieving high levels of performance from individuals and teams, as appropriate in line with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Working with fellow colleagues across the organisation to identify new opportunities to maximise efficiencies, continuously drive improvements and increase performance to deliver corporate priorities ensuring services that are delivered or commissioned meet the highest possible standard and that all individuals take ownership and drive change.

Develop a resident focused culture delivering excellent services, motivating and encouraging all others to get the basics right and strive for improvement.

Collaboration

To actively seek opportunities for establishing, building and maintaining successful relationships with partners, stakeholders and agencies in other sectors in order to identify opportunities to deliver services in an innovative way that secures a real improvement to public services and delivers efficiencies.

To contribute to the communication of the vision and values of the organisation to a broad range of stakeholders in order to champion a cooperative borough and establish the Council as a leader across many disciplines and an innovator of service delivery.

Work together with residents as appropriate to understand their requirements to shape and deliver great services.

To act as a role model for the council and promote excellent external relations by representing the authority at national, regional and local levels; promoting the organisation and influencing others to share the vision of Oldham.

Political Engagement

To support elected members as local leaders, developing strong working relationships with elected members to understand their needs; as appropriate, providing high level advice and support to them that will contribute to the Council's performance.

To work closely and effectively with elected members to translate visions and priorities into achievable strategies and policies as appropriate in consultation with key partners, residents and other stakeholders.

General

Undertake any duties commensurate with the level of the post as required and as agreed with the postholder from time to time.



Standard Duties

- ✔ To take every opportunity to raise awareness of the Council's ambitions and achievements, both internally and externally and make a cooperative difference by encouraging others to do their bit as well as actively demonstrating the same.
- ✔ To promote the Cooperative Customer Strategy of the Council/ Directorate.
- ✔ To ensure compliance with all statutory & legislative requirements e.g. health & safety, equality etc.
- ✔ To participate in self-improvement in performance through workplace development.



Selection criteria

Education and Qualifications

Educated to degree level or professional qualification relevant to the post or extensive experience within postholders portfolio of responsibility.

Knowledge

Experience of service delivery within a commercially focused organisation

Skills and Abilities

Ability to develop strategies and translate them into effective operational plans.

The ability to motivate, empower and direct staff to enable them to achieve the operational objectives.

Able to work flexibly across a broad range of services and disciplines.

Ability to communicate a compelling vision to key stakeholders internally and externally to achieve operational outcomes.

Business acumen from creating a commercial environment where the management of cost/budgets and customer satisfaction is paramount and productivity is high.

Experience relevant to the role

A demonstrable record of senior strategic leadership achievement and experience.

Proven experience of working effectively and impartially with elected members and in supporting the democratic decision making process.

Expertise in leading successful large scale organisation change programmes.

A track record of significant achievement and service improvements that have improved organisation performance.

Experience of leading a range of services.

Success in developing working relationships and partnerships, working collaboratively to deliver excellent services.

Significant experience of resource management; people, financial and physical.

A successful track record of forging and maintaining working partnerships with communities / service users to ensure the development, design and delivery of services that reflect their needs.

Able to demonstrate examples of major efficiency programmes that have delivered service improvements.

How to apply

To apply, simply visit our job site and submit your application.

 [VISIT OUR JOB SITE](#)

For a confidential conversation about this role, please contact our retained consultants at Penna:

Pete John on 07701 305617 or pete.john@penna.com
Ali Tasker on 07514 728114 or ali.tasker@penna.com

Your CV should include:

- Full contact details
- Names, positions, organisations and contact details for two referees (we will ask your permission before contacting referees)
- Details of your notice period

Closing date:
Sun 11 January 2026



“I can’t promise you it will be easy, but I can promise you it will be incredibly rewarding.”

Cllr. Arooj Shah, Leader of Oldham Council