



Team Leader Application Pack

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining our friendly and dynamic team. The pack contents are:

- About Play Midlothian
- The Team Leader Role at Play Midlothian
 - Overview
 - Out2Play
 - Other areas of work
 - Hours
 - Management and coordination
- Organisational structure
- Job Description
- Person Specification
- What We Offer

We hope this pack provides the information you need to decide if you wish to apply for the role. However, if you have any questions, please do contact Susan McIntyre at susan@playmidlothian.org.uk or on 07792 402 316.

About Play Midlothian

Play Midlothian is a registered charity (no. SC025474) working to enable every child in Midlothian to thrive through play by creating opportunities, removing barriers and addressing inequalities. We focus on play because we know how much this benefits children's health, wellbeing and development. It is important for their lives in the here and now as well as for their future life chances.

We provide services for children and young people (aged 0-14) and families and build the capacity of communities to support play (including training and development opportunities for other settings, including schools). We are a partner in the cross-sector Midlothian Play Strategy, which takes a strategic approach in planning for and promoting play locally.

Our current main services for children (and where applicable their parents) are:

- Play in Mind, which provides adventurous play and relaxation in woodlands for children aged 7-14 with emerging mental health challenges, to reduce stress and build resilience, with occasional blocks of sessions for the whole family.
- Play for All, which supports disabled children aged 0-14 and their families to access play, through group play sessions and 1-to-1 support in homes or parks, helping families meet their child's different needs and be included.
- Out2Play, which encourages children aged 5-12 to play out close to home in greenspaces within five locations, by reducing safety concerns about playing out (such as local ASB or bullying) and tempting children away from screens with interesting play resources.

We have an office base at the One Dalkeith Business Hub in central Dalkeith, but deliver services throughout Midlothian, and if commissioned, beyond.

The Team Leader Role at Play Midlothian

Overview

The team leader role is central to ensuring our services run smoothly and to a high standard, enabling children to thrive through play. This is a practical role, combining hands-on delivery with the day-to-day coordination of services, while demonstrating an enthusiasm for Play Midlothian's aims and values.

Play Midlothian uses a range of delivery models, but all services have playwork practice (please see for example <https://www.playscotland.org/schools-childcare/playwork-professionals>) and self-directed play at their core, in particular use of loose parts

and play with natural materials. Note that a playwork qualification is not a requirement. It is essential that the successful applicant enjoys all types of play, doesn't feel a need to structure play or overly structure the play environment, and can respond flexibly to the needs of participants – both children and adults. We particularly focus on aspects of play children may otherwise have less access to, for example, outdoor play, and do not usually provide for digital play, which children typically do experience.

The postholder should also enjoy working as part of a team and be able to build productive relationships with our participants, colleagues and other stakeholders. Play Midlothian's services take place in a variety of community settings around Midlothian. Some are indoors, though a high proportion of our current sessions are exclusively outdoors (all year round), therefore the role will particularly suit applicants with a fondness for the outdoors. Travel and transportation of play resources to multiple sites across Midlothian is required for successful delivery of our services.

Each team leader coordinates a specific service at Play Midlothian, however the positions are not fixed to that specific service – there is flexibility to change who leads on what if operational need changes. Therefore it would be helpful for candidates to have a broad interest in play and working on different service models, and with different age groups of children and young people.

We run a training programme, and although we do not need all of our team leaders to deliver our formal training, there may be opportunities for the postholder to do this.

For the right candidate, this will be a highly rewarding and stimulating role, offering plenty of variety in their work, while enabling their passion for children's play to shine through. There is a strong culture of teamwork and support within Play Midlothian, so please do not feel daunted by areas of work you have yet to develop into – what matters most is a growth mindset with willingness to learn.

Out2Play

This team leader postholder, on appointment, will coordinate Out2Play. This is a drop-in service using the play rangers model of delivery to enable children to play outdoors in greenspaces close to their homes, all year round in all weathers (except hazardous). It entails clearing hazards such as glass and dog foul before children arrive, providing interesting resources for play, and being a supportive presence, helping make play outdoors safe and appealing. All ages are welcome, though we ask that children under 5 are accompanied. Teenagers sometimes stop by for a chat or to help with the younger children. The majority of participants are aged 5-12.

Play in Mind

This team leader postholder, on appointment, will also coordinate some of our Play in Mind sessions, as the service has expanded (another Team Leader coordinates the majority of these sessions). Play in Mind supports children aged 7-13 with emerging mental health issues (such as

anxiety, stress or very low self-esteem) through adventurous self-directed play in nature. Children can build dens, climb trees, make campfires, relax in hammocks, create crafts and explore nature. We also guide children through 'mindful' activities such as listening to the sounds of nature and a sharing circle. These sessions can take place either after school or in partnership with schools during the school day.

Other areas of work

The postholder will also staff other sessions, including our Play for All service for disabled children and their families, though Out2Play is expected to form over half of the hours, and Play in Mind around a quarter. All Team Leaders participate in some degree of delivery of each of the services on a rota pattern – helping share ideas, learning and support throughout the team.

Regardless of target group at each service, the goal is always ultimately to ensure children have access to the opportunity to play in their own ways, for their own reasons, in interesting environments – because we know that when this happens, fantastic outcomes naturally arise.

Hours

Most of our sessions take place after school hours (including at times in the evening) and at weekends (chiefly Saturdays though this may in future extend into Sundays), however, we do share out weekend working on a rota pattern so that everyone gets predictable weekends off. Some sessions, usually Play in Mind provision with schools, take place during the school day. Therefore, it is important that candidates have the availability and flexibility to work in this way, adapting their working hours to our session schedules (though planning and admin hours can fit around this as preferred).

The role is 30 hours per week, however there may be periodic opportunities for voluntary paid overtime, or scope to increase contracted hours in future, if desired, subject to service development and funding.

Management and coordination

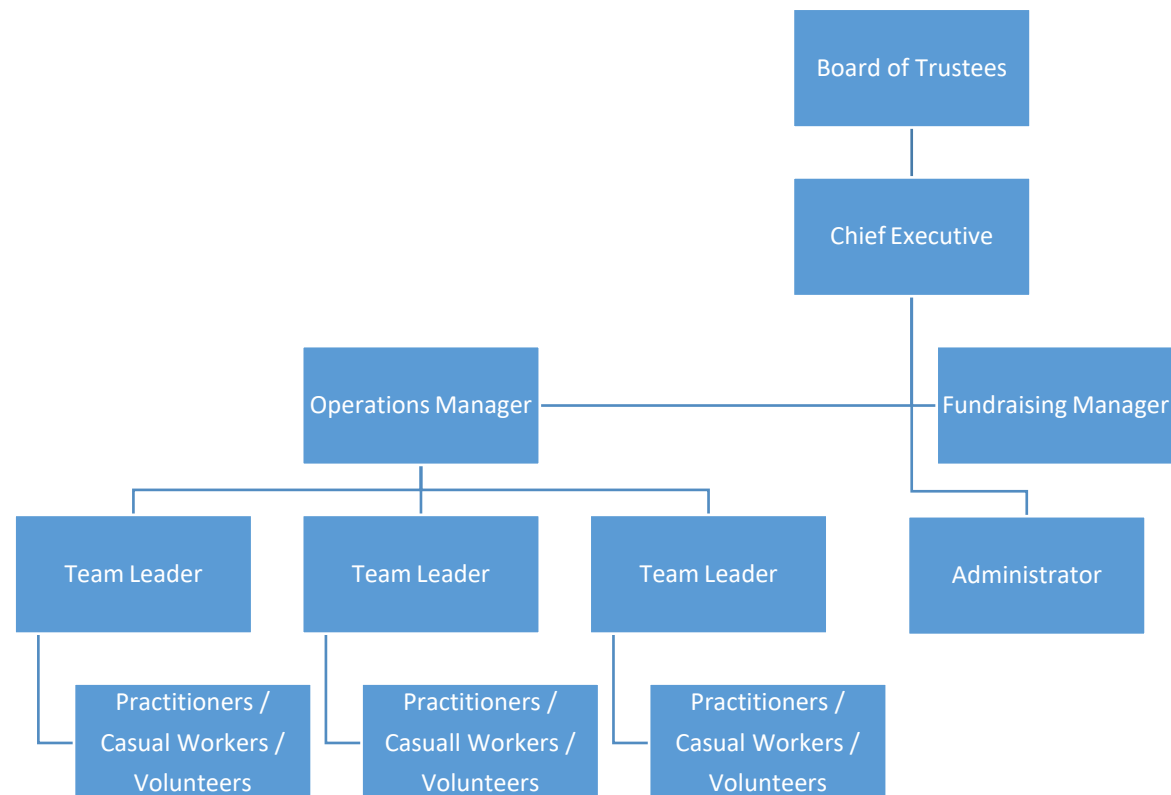
The Operations Manager is the service manager, with responsibilities around, for example, creating evaluation methods, marketing plans and materials and systems needed for the services, with Team Leaders leading on implementation and what will happen at each play session. Team leaders are frontline managers, who line manage our play and wellbeing practitioners, taking the lead on decision making during sessions, providing guidance and encouragement, and holding support and supervision and appraisal meetings. They also coordinate and guide our casual workers and volunteers. The team is small, so each team leader will typically only manage one play and wellbeing practitioner, and oversee a few casual workers or volunteers.

Training and support on all aspects of management will be available. Where there are issues, these should be escalated to the Operations Manager, who will provide support and get involved as necessary – for example it would always be the Operations Manager who handles disciplinarys or grievances. Play Midlothian also has HR advisors on board to help with any staff-related matters arising. This is a fantastic opportunity for someone with playwork, youth work or family support experience who wishes to take a supported step into frontline management – or who already has management experience and is keen to grow further.

Management and coordination aspects of the role include:

- Coordinating rotas / absence cover, session plans and resources
- Managing small delegated service budgets and making purchases
- Leading on handling any incidents or issues at sessions
- Supporting the team to use reflective practice
- Building relationships with children, families, communities and partner organisations

Organisational Structure



Job Description

30 hours per week, £28,055 - £29,772 pro rata (35 hour FTE)

Please note that appointments are made to the first point on the salary scale. Progression through the scale is based on time served and performance. Play Midlothian has a track record in also applying cost of living increases each year.

Responsible to: Operations Manager

Job purpose: To coordinate and deliver high quality services in accordance with Play Midlothian's objectives, enabling children to thrive through play

Place of work: Play Midlothian's office in Dalkeith as the main base, with play sessions delivered throughout Midlothian. Admin hours can usually be worked at home under our hybrid working policy.

Line manages: Play and wellbeing practitioners (also guides casual workers and volunteers)

Key job outcomes:

- 1. Service users (children, young people and adults) receive high quality support, tailored to their needs and the service objectives.**
Provides support to service users and builds appropriate relationships. Facilitates all types of play. Leads on tailoring support, including strategies to manage challenges.
- 2. Play skills and knowledge are shared with and embedded in communities.** Raises awareness of play. Delivers effective training and capacity-building support on play to a range of stakeholders. Produces content on play for wider dissemination.
- 3. Play Midlothian's services run effectively and efficiently.** Accountable for managing the practicalities of service delivery and for decision-making at sessions. Effectively utilises delegated budgets. Assists with publicity as required. Arranges rotas and absence cover within approved parameters.

4. **Play Midlothian's service delivery is appropriately risk managed.** Uses good judgment for dynamic risk-benefit assessment during sessions, and supports the play team to improve this skill. Writes risk-benefit assessments for services with approval from the Operations Manager.
5. **The play team is supported to deliver high quality play sessions.** Facilitates reflective practice in the play team. Supports the play team to meet service objectives and required standards, with support from senior staff. Identifies learning needs, and plans training and support for play and wellbeing practitioners, casual workers and volunteers as required.
6. **Play Midlothian has a good understanding of the participant experience of our services.** Implements provided evaluation plans and methods, and collates data as required. Observes and listens carefully at sessions. Helps bring the perspective of service users to planning at all levels.

Other responsibilities:

- Any other duties relevant to the responsibilities of the post and which may be delegated by Play Midlothian management.

Person Specification

Essential	Desirable
• Has worked in a play setting as a practitioner or manager • Membership of the PVG scheme for children	• A qualification or training in playwork • Experience of working with families • Experience of working with disabled children • A driving license

Key skills and competencies

Playful: Enjoys play and is able to be involved in all types of play without taking over. Can respond flexibly and creatively to children's play cues.

Reflective practice: Can reflect on what is happening and why. Able to explore alternative explanations, problem solve, and learn through trying out approaches. Can involve others in this process.

Communication: Able to share knowledge in ways others can understand and relate to, through good written and verbal communication. Able to build constructive relationships with children, young people and adults of all backgrounds and abilities. Can support team dynamics.

Flexibility: Confidence and willingness to work across a range of different services with different target groups and goals, through the focal point of play. Flexible approach to work hours.

Planning and organisation: Able to plan workload for self and for team. Can anticipate practical needs of services. Pays attention to detail and can be accurate in use of paperwork and systems. Able to be pragmatic in approach.

Resilience: Stays calm and can think on their feet under pressure. Not fazed by behaviour that challenges or is unexpected. Able to overcome setbacks.

Self-motivated: Enjoys work and is able to use own initiative in all aspects of their work. Is motivated to achieve both their own goals and tasks that are delegated.

Teamwork: Able to work well within a team as well as independently. Confidence to guide team and lead on team decision-making.

Values-led: Has an enthusiasm for Play Midlothian's aims and shares in our values. Can apply these values to all their work.

What We Offer

- A varied and rewarding role, with the chance to make a real difference to children and families.
- A supportive and welcoming working environment.
- Opportunities for training and professional development.
- Enhanced sick pay.
- Holiday entitlement of 32 days (pro rata) per year, rising one day per anniversary of employment to a maximum of 37 days. This is inclusive of bank holidays, which can be taken flexibly.
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – a work-based, confidential employee benefit providing support and resources for personal and work-related challenges that affect employees' health, wellbeing, and performance.

- Hybrid Working Policy. Note – play sessions are always in person at set locations. Planning, admin or online training associated with the role can be done at home if preferred.

We are currently exploring other potential staff benefits and will launch a survey to explore what most appeals to current staff.