

## Job Description: Head of Service Design (maternity cover)

**Duration:** This position is offered on a full-time basis, though we welcome applications from candidates interested in working 3–4 days per week - 9 Month Fixed Term Contract.

**Salary:** SME2 (£50,807)

**Ideal Start date:** 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026

**Location:** London Office with hybrid working

**Reporting to:** Assistant Director of Research & Impact

**Department:** Impact

**Direct Reports:** Design Manager

### Purpose of the job

This role is responsible for the design of UK Youth's support to young people, youth organisations and youth workers. This could include structured youth work programmes, funding and grants+ programmes, professional development initiatives, and campaigns.

You will lead and oversee end-to-end design processes, ensuring that UK Youth develops fully packaged offers that respond to the evidence base and people's needs, drive forward our strategy and achieve incredible impact. You will work across UK Youth teams, with external design partners, and meaningfully involving young people and the professionals who support them in the design process.

You will be experienced in developing high quality funding propositions (proactively and in response to new business opportunities). You will be confident in taking a human-centred design approach to tackle some of the youth sector's knottiest problems. You will design solutions to important problems, ensuring that they are feasible, equitable, impactful and scalable.

In 2026, our priority topics for youth work programmes and network development are: mental health and wellbeing, employability, social cohesion and community safety.

As a leader, you will work closely with research, evaluation, policy, service delivery, network development, and fundraising teams. You will help to improve the skills and confidence of colleagues across UK Youth to apply design methods in their own work and collaborate effectively with the Design team.

### Why work at UK Youth?

UK Youth wants all young people to be equipped to thrive and empowered to contribute at every stage of their lives. Youth work can be life changing (and even life saving.) In 2026, we will be launching our new strategy, positioning UK Youth to unlock youth work so that every young person in the UK can benefit. We work with others to ensure that the youth sector is strengthened and that provision is youth-led, evidence-informed, and delivers high-quality outcomes.

UK Youth plays a unique role in addressing the lack of investment in the youth sector, the lack of cross-sector understanding in how youth work makes a difference, and the limited opportunities to embed effective solutions. These factors lead to mass inequality of access to youth services for young people. Come and be part of this change in a driven and supportive team that puts evidence at the heart of our work.

## Responsibilities

### Designing Solutions

- Work with research and evaluation colleagues to respond to the needs and preferences of young people and the professionals who support them.
- Lead and oversee the end-to-end design of interventions involving multiple stakeholders and users.
- Be responsible for the development of service models, youth development content, and workforce development programmes and campaigns that are based on the best available evidence (including meaningful user involvement).
- Facilitate workshops and design sprints to rapidly design, test, and iterate prototypes.

### Developing new business and funding propositions

- Responsibility for translating UK Youth's new strategy (due to launch in April 2026) into well-packaged fundable, deliverable, evaluable, scalable programmatic and network development offers
- Ensure that Design works closely with External Relations and other departments to develop attractive multi-funder propositions in response to emerging business development opportunities.
- Support the income generation process by contributing to the identification, development and pitching of new work. You will provide design insight and lead design process in response to new business opportunities.
- Lead collaborative design processes with the Network Delivery and Outdoor Learning Departments to ensure that our products and services are feasible, impactful, and accurately costed.
- Support the mobilisation of newly funded activity to ensure that concept design flows through to high quality programme content and positive user journeys.
- Collaborate with colleagues from research and evaluation teams to ensure that new solutions can be robustly evaluated and insights are fed back into design.

### Embedding Human Centred Design

- Ensure that UK Youth takes an inclusive design approach and that all our activities promote equity and anti-oppression in the youth sector.
- Ensure children and young people play a strong leadership role in designing and developing UK Youth's offer.
- Remain engaged with the latest developments and methodological innovations in user-centred design.
- Understand and respond to new trends and innovations in the youth and outdoor learning sectors.
- Work in the open throughout the design process, demonstrating progress and process through visualisations, presentations, and reports.
- Contribute to the continual development of the charity's approach to Human Centred Design.
- Embed design methods and mindsets through your work, building the capacity and capabilities of teams across the charity and partners in the youth sector.
- Work with non-designers through the design process, ensuring the design process is accessible and engaging for stakeholders and users.
- Work collaboratively with other leaders across the charity to ensure the design process is well integrated and ways of working between departments are continuously improved.

## Building a strong external network to support the Design team's work

- Build strong sector relationships and identify suitable partnership opportunities with those well-placed to inform or support UK Youth's offer.
- Be responsible for commissioning and managing external design freelancers and consultants where additional resource, specific expertise or sector knowledge is needed, to agreed budgets and timelines
- Represent UK Youth at meetings and events – helping to disseminate insights from our work and improve cross-sector understanding of youth work.

## Operations

- Build strong working relationships and work collaboratively with leadership colleagues across the charity to drive continuous improvement of ways of working between teams.
- Actively support the charity's internal governance processes, providing updates from within your remit, supporting effective decision-making, prioritisation, problem solving and resource planning across the organisation.
- Work with the Chief Impact Officer and Assistant Director of Research & Impact to shape the charity's annual business plan and budget, reviewing and setting the Design team's objectives and ensuring that workloads are balanced.
- Develop and manage budgets for design processes and report on these in accordance with project, funder, and organisational financial management requirements.
- Line manage, develop, and support the Design Manager
- Deputise for the Chief Impact Officer and Assistant Director of Research and Impact and work closely with colleagues to cover for each other as required.
- Undertake any other duties and reasonable requests that are in keeping with the nature of this post.

## Subject Matter Expert behaviours and expectations

All staff at UK Youth will demonstrate their commitment to our mission to ensure all young people are equipped to thrive and empowered to contribute at every stage of their lives. You will also be able to fulfil the following expectations and behaviours:

- Be committed to safeguarding principles, and be willing to put the welfare of children and young people at the forefront of your work.
- Demonstrate an understanding and belief in the inclusion of all staff, partners and young people irrespective of race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, ability, identity, and experience.
- Actively promote and embed an understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Role model and reinforce collaborative working, build productive relationships to find solutions and influence decisions.
- Be able to set clear expectations, articulate what good performance looks like, and set strategic direction to ensure high-quality work from colleagues you work with.
- Empower and energise teams to achieve goals and communicate a compelling vision and direction in their area of responsibility.
- Enable a culture of learning from mistakes and continuous learning.
- Create an environment where wellbeing can be openly discussed.
- Role model and foster innovation and creativity.

## Person Specification: Head of Design

### Experience

- Significant experience of leading and overseeing the development of new business propositions and proposals to time-limited funding opportunities
- Significant experience of designing interventions (digital and/or physical) for young people and/or those who support them
- Experience using human-centred-design methods and mindsets; managing projects across the end-to-end design process
- Proven track record of inspiring and motivating diverse teams and improving collaborative ways of working across teams and departments
- Experience of developing high quality programme content and curricula for young people, youth workers and/or outdoor learning instructors (desirable)
- Experience of commissioning and managing external design freelancers and consultants (desirable)
- Experience of designing and/or delivering professional development programmes (desirable)

### Knowledge, skills and understanding

- Strong practical understanding of efficient business development processes
- Deep understanding and empathy of the current issues facing young people
- Strong leadership skills, with the ability to inspire a team
- Strong relationship building skills, with the ability to connect with diverse groups of people
- Expert in collaboratively developing Logframes and Theories of Change to build collective understanding of how a solution will address complex problems
- Excellent design skills, with the ability to embed and transfer knowledge
- Excellent facilitation skills, able to facilitate engaging and purposeful co-design processes
- Excellent verbal and written communicator; able to explain, persuade and influence varied stakeholders
- Significant knowledge of youth work, youth development and/or outdoor learning
- Excellent problem solving skills, finding creative solutions to complex problems
- Knowledge of a range of user research methods
- Knowledge of effective learning approaches for young people and adults
- Understanding of systems change methodologies (desirable)
- Knowledge of the UK grant making landscape (desirable)
- Knowledge of accreditation and qualifications frameworks (desirable)
- Good knowledge of the possibilities of digital (desirable)
- Youth work qualification at Level 3 or above (desirable)

### Personal qualities

- Inclusive, collaborative and approachable leader
- Inspiring, motivating and articulate communicator
- Motivated self-starter
- Able to use radical candour to support quick and effective decision-making and problem solving across teams
- Creative thinker, with the ability to challenge and disrupt in a constructive and positive way
- Flexible, with the ability to manage multiple personal and team workloads
- Excited by systems change rather than systems improvement

This post is subject to receipt of two satisfactory references, an enhanced DBS check, and right to work in the UK. Please note, this job description is subject to change. With any significant change, we will ensure this is discussed with you before any final approvals and or commitments.