Job description

Title: Principal Designer

Post no: PREF106521

Department: Chief Executive

Division: Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT)

Responsible to: Head of Digital Development

Grade: M6

Purpose of post:

The Principal Designer is an expert practitioner within Luton Council's Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) function. The post holder develops and leads content strategy and content design for complex, high profile and high impact services, ensuring that content meets user needs and supports the Council's Digital 2040 Agenda.

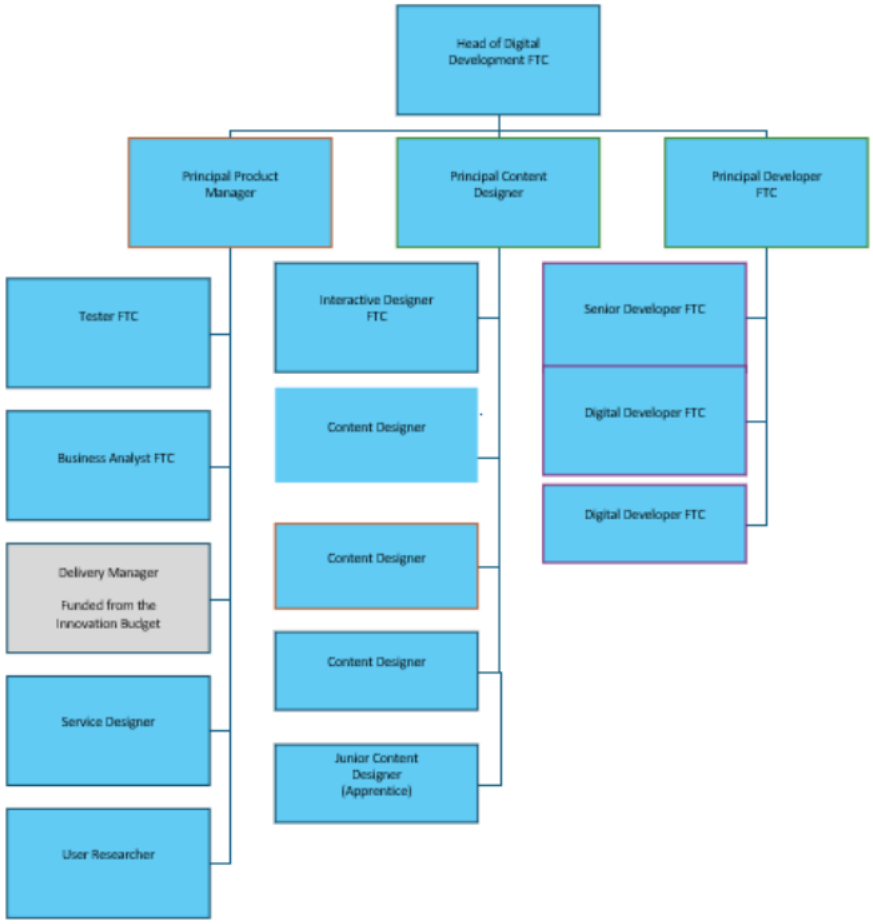
Working as part of multidisciplinary delivery teams, the post holder will shape end-to-end user journeys, map and write user stories, and produce clear, accessible content for Council digital services (including web and transactional content). They will influence and negotiate with stakeholders to agree the right content, reduce duplication, and create consistent patterns and standards.

At this level, the post holder takes responsibility for content quality and governance, reviews and assures the work of others, and provides coaching and mentoring to content colleagues. They will lead cross service content improvement initiatives, champion user centred and accessible content design, and engage with wider content communities of practice to share learning and adopt best practice.

This is seen as a Principal level role – SFIA Level - 6 – Initiate / Influence - our most senior experts — shaping the whole discipline and its strategy.

This role is part of the DDaT Design Career Progression Scheme at Luton Council.

Organisation chart



Principal responsibilities

1. Content strategy and direction

- Lead content strategy and content design for complex, high impact services and cross service journeys, ensuring content supports organisational goals and meets user needs.
- Define and maintain content standards, patterns and governance (including review cycles), and assure that content is consistent, usable and accessible across channels.
- Lead content design for forms and transactional journeys delivered through Council platforms (for example CMS/CRM), ensuring content is user centred, accessible and consistent.
- Plan and prioritise content improvement using evidence (for example analytics, search data, contact centre insight and user research), including running content audits and maintaining a clear review and improvement backlog.

35%

2. User centred content design and delivery

- Plan, write and iterate end-to-end content for digital services, including web, transactional and assisted digital content, using plain language and inclusive design principles.

- Write and map user stories, acceptance criteria and content requirements, working closely with product, delivery, design, development, user research and performance analysis colleagues.
- Design content across channels where needed to support end-to-end journeys (for example web, email/SMS, letters, and assisted digital scripts), ensuring a consistent experience for all users.

20%

3. Prototyping, testing and evidence-based iteration

- Create and iterate prototypes to explore content in context (from lo-fi sketches to high-fidelity prototypes), selecting the right approach for the audience and stage of delivery.
- Collaborate with user researchers to formulate hypotheses, plan research, interpret findings and translate insights into clear content decisions, explaining rationale to stakeholders.

15%

4. Content quality assurance, accessibility and governance

- Take responsibility for content quality across assigned services, reviewing and assuring content against standards (including style, tone, accessibility, and legal/policy requirements).
- Establish and maintain content documentation (for example, content models, decision logs, patterns and guidance) to support consistent delivery and ongoing improvement.

15%

5. Stakeholder management and cross service delivery

- Build strong relationships with stakeholders across the Council, negotiating and influencing to agree the best content outcomes, resolve blockers and maintain focus on user needs.
- Lead or contribute to cross service content projects (for example, service redesigns, policy changes, high profile communications or content migrations), coordinating delivery and managing dependencies.
- Handle complex and sensitive content decisions by identifying risks, recommending options, documenting rationale, and escalating high risk issues at the right time to protect users and the Council.

10%

6. Leadership, mentoring and continuous improvement

- Provide day-to-day guidance, coaching and constructive critique for content colleagues, supporting capability development and assuring the quality of content outputs.
- Champion continuous improvement by using data and feedback to prioritise changes, share learning across teams, and contribute to content communities of practice.
- Lead by example on ways of working (including Agile content design), support prioritisation and planning, and review and assure content work delivered by others so that standards are met.

5%

Dimensions

Supervisory management: Responsible for management of content team (content designers, junior content designers, UX designers)

Financial resources: None

Physical resources: None required

Other: N/A

Context

The Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) function is responsible for delivering and improving the Council's digital platforms, applications and online services. Content design is central to ensuring residents, businesses and colleagues can find what they need, understand what to do, and complete tasks successfully across end-to-end journeys.

The Principal Designer works as part of multidisciplinary delivery teams and with stakeholders across services to shape content strategy, define standards and patterns, and design, test and iterate content based on evidence. They will actively share learning, encourage reuse of proven content patterns, and contribute to wider local government and cross sector communities of practice. The role requires a practical, detail focused and user centred approach, championing accessibility and continuous improvement. This is an agile role, requiring flexibility in working arrangements in line with the Council's agile working policies.

Additional information

Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) Alignment:

Primarily aligned to SFIA Level 6 (Initiate / Influence)

Primary SFIA skillsets include:

- Content design
- User experience design
- Stakeholder relationship management
- Information content publishing
- Methods and tools (Agile delivery)

Attribute Skills	Level	SFIA Description
Autonomy	6	Works under broad direction, being fully accountable for meeting assigned objectives and for the effectiveness of content strategy and content design within a significant area. Establishes and assures standards for content quality and accessibility, makes high impact

		decisions, and initiates improvements that affect multiple services and channels.
Influence	6	Influences organisation wide and cross service stakeholders, shaping decisions on content approach, priorities and standards. Leads on resolving complex content issues, provides authoritative advice, and builds consensus across teams with differing perspectives, keeping focus on user needs, accessibility and risk.
Complexity	6	Performs highly complex work involving strategic content problems across multiple services and channels. Leads definition of options and recommendations where solutions are not obvious, balancing user needs, policy, legal requirements, operational constraints and organisational priorities. Anticipates and manages dependencies, risks and impacts across end-to-end journeys.
Knowledge	6	Has deep professional knowledge of content design, accessibility, plain language and user centred design, and applies it to set direction and improve outcomes at scale. Uses a broad understanding of public sector delivery, governance and relevant legislation to make and defend decisions. Coaches and mentors others and contributes specialist leadership to build organisational capability.

Additional information

Physical effort and/or working environment

Physical effort: Normal office environment

Working environment: The post is appropriate for agile working practices, and the post holder will be expected to work from a variety of locations

Person specification

This acts as selection criteria and gives an outline of the types of person and the characteristics required to do the job.

Essential (E): without which candidate would be rejected

Desirable (D): useful for choosing between two good candidates

Please make sure, when completing your application form, you give clear examples of how you meet the essential and desirable criteria.

Attributes	Essential	How measured	Desirable	How measured
Experience	Extensive experience leading content design for complex digital services and end-to-end journeys, including setting direction and assuring quality. Experience designing, prototyping and iterating content for transactional journeys, using user research and performance data to make decisions. Proven ability to influence stakeholders to agree content decisions, manage risk and remove blockers while maintaining focus on user needs and accessibility. Experience establishing content standards and governance (including review cycles) and improving quality through peer review, critique and coaching.	1,2 1,2 1,2 1,2	Experience working in a public sector or local government environment, including managing content risks in a policy and legislation led context. Experience supporting and improving live services using performance data (for example analytics and search insight) to identify and prioritise content improvements. Experience publishing and maintaining content in a CMS (including Drupal), including managing review cycles, workflow/approvals, and contributing to content migrations or restructures.	1 1 1
Skills / abilities	Excellent content design and writing skills, with the ability to simplify complex	1,2 C		

	information and maintain a consistent tone of voice. Ability to lead content discovery and set direction for others, including journey mapping and writing/mapping user stories. Strong accessibility knowledge (including WCAG) and the ability to negotiate and communicate content decisions clearly with technical and non-technical stakeholders.	1,2 C 1,2		
Equality issues	Understanding of equality, accessibility and inclusion considerations in digital service delivery. Awareness of the importance of accessible and usable digital services for diverse communities.	1,2 1,2		
Specialist knowledge	Deep knowledge of content design methods, including information architecture, content modelling, patterns and governance. Expertise in plain language and accessible content (including WCAG), adapting content for different channels and audiences. Knowledge of public sector content assurance, including managing sensitive content, decision records, and using data to	1,2 C 1,2 C 1,2 C	Experience applying (or working in environments aligned to) GOV.UK content standards, service patterns and assessment expectations. Experience developing content patterns and guidance at scale, including contributing to (or maintaining) a pattern library, style guide or content playbook.	1,2 1,2

	measure and improve content performance.		Experience improving findability (for example, on-site search, SEO, metadata and taxonomy) and supporting content migrations or restructures.	1,2
Education and training	Degree or equivalent professional qualification, or substantial equivalent experience in content design, communications, UX or a related discipline.	4 C	Evidence of continuous professional development	1,2
Other requirements	Able to attend meetings in and outside the borough when required and be able to work flexibly.			

1 = Application form
2 = Interview
3 = Test
4 = Proof of qualification
5 = Practical exercise

We will consider any reasonable adjustments under the terms of the Equality Act (2010), to enable an applicant with a disability (as defined under the Act) to meet the requirements of the post.

The job-holder will ensure that Luton Council's policies are reflected in all aspects of his/her work, in particular those relating to:

- Equal opportunities
- Health and Safety
- Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation (2018)
- GCSx Acceptable Usage Policy (where applicable)