

Role Profile

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Job Title | Senior Director, Operations South |
| Grade | SB2 |
| Department | Operations |
| Reports To | Chief Executive Officer |
| Direct Reports | Head of Reader Services, Head of Reference Services, Head of Security, Service Improvement Manager |
| Location | St. Pancras and travel to Boston Spa |

| |
|---|
| <p>The Role</p> <p>This is a senior leadership role with responsibility for leading and shaping the British Library’s operational services across its southern site, centred on St Pancras. The role sits at the heart of the organisation’s delivery model, ensuring that core services are effective, resilient and aligned to the Library’s strategic priorities.</p> <p>Working as part of the Senior Leadership Team, the Operations Director South plays a central role in translating strategy into operational reality. The position carries accountability for a broad and complex portfolio of services, including reading room operations and security, collections access, and associated service delivery functions. These services are critical to the Library’s public offer, its national responsibilities and its reputation for excellence.</p> <p>A key dimension of the role is leadership through complexity. The operational environment is high profile and multi layered, requiring careful balancing of service performance, workforce engagement and organisational change. The role will require visible, confident leadership to build trust and momentum within teams, particularly in the context of workforce dissatisfaction and ongoing union relationships. Creating a more engaged, motivated and high performing operational culture will be a central priority.</p> <p>The role also operates at the interface between operations and transformation. Close collaboration with capital programmes, including the St Pancras transformation agenda, will be essential to ensure that operational requirements are embedded in future design and delivery. This includes shaping how services evolve in response to changes in the estate, visitor experience and digital capability.</p> <p>As the principal advisor on operational matters to the Chief Executive and wider leadership team, the role requires strong judgement, credibility and the ability to navigate a complex stakeholder environment. The Senior Director, Operations South will represent the Library internally and externally, ensuring that operational services are aligned, integrated and delivering consistently high standards.</p> <p>This is a role that combines strategic leadership with operational grip, requiring a leader who can drive performance today while shaping a more sustainable, modern and user focused service for the future.</p> |
|---|

Key Responsibilities

As a British Library leader, this role carries responsibility for embracing and leading change, maintaining a clear focus on outcomes, and placing the Library's users, staff and partners at the centre of decision making and delivery. As a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the role also contributes to the collective leadership of the organisation, supporting an inclusive and collaborative environment and the effective delivery of the Library's wider strategic priorities.

The Operations Director South will:

- **Provide leadership and accountability for operational services at St Pancras**
Leading a broad portfolio of front line and enabling services, ensuring that operations are effective, efficient and aligned to organisational priorities, while maintaining consistently high standards of service delivery
- **Act as the principal advisor on operational matters**
Providing expert strategic and operational advice to the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team, ensuring that operational considerations are fully integrated into organisational decision making and future planning
- **Drive operational performance and continuous improvement**
Establishing clear performance expectations, strengthening service management disciplines and embedding a culture of accountability, innovation and continuous improvement across all operational functions
- **Lead workforce engagement and cultural change**
Addressing current workforce challenges through visible and authentic leadership, rebuilding trust and engagement, and developing constructive relationships with trade unions to support a more positive and productive working environment
- **Oversee delivery of core library operations**
Ensuring effective delivery across key service areas maintaining compliance with all relevant standards and statutory requirements
- **Integrate operations with capital and transformation programmes**
Working closely with programme and estates colleagues to ensure that operational requirements are embedded within the St Pancras transformation programme and wider capital developments, enabling seamless transition to future operating models
- **Build effective internal and external relationships**
Working collaboratively across the organisation and with external partners, developing strong networks and ensuring alignment between operational delivery and broader strategic objectives
- **Lead and develop high performing teams**
Creating an environment in which individuals and teams are supported, challenged and developed, fostering a culture of collaboration, learning and continuous improvement across a diverse workforce
- **Ensure compliance, governance and risk management**
Maintaining robust oversight of operational risks, ensuring compliance with legislation, regulatory requirements and internal governance frameworks, and supporting effective organisational assurance
- **Act as a visible leader and ambassador for the Library**
Representing the Library in operational matters internally and externally, communicating with clarity and credibility, and reinforcing confidence in service delivery and organisational direction
- **Champion values, inclusion and sustainability**
Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of leadership and decision making, while ensuring that sustainability principles are integrated into operational practices and future planning

Through this role, the Senior Director, Operations South will play a critical part in strengthening the Library's operational performance, improving workforce engagement and ensuring that services are well positioned to support the organisation's future ambitions.

Our Values

We put users at the heart of everything we do

We listen, innovate and adapt to a changing world

We treat everyone with respect and compassion

We embrace equality, fairness and diversity

We act with openness and honesty

We collaborate to do more than we could by ourselves

Our Expectations

All strategic leaders within the British Library, are expected to exhibit the requirements of our Strategic Leadership Behaviours & Competency Framework.

Director roles are expected to specifically excel in the following, which form part of the role profile and job description and therefore are considered formal performance measures:

Seeing the big picture

- anticipate the long-term impact on the British Library of economic, political, environmental, social and technological developments, at both national and international levels
- create joined up strategies that put into practice and support the British Library's vision for the future
- identify and shape how your work area fits within and supports the priorities of the organization
- develop an in-depth insight into customers, services, communities and markets affected by your work areas and the wider public sector context
- ensure work is in the national interest whilst meeting the diverse needs of all end users

Developing self and others

- provide a range of experiences to encourage development, talent and career management for all individuals.
- role-model continuous self-learning and development, evaluate effectiveness and plan next steps
- ensure colleagues take responsibility for their own learning and development
- provide colleagues with opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with others to build organisational effectiveness
- share your own expertise through coaching and mentoring to support teams to succeed

- create an inclusive environment from which all individuals can develop regardless of their needs or background
- deliver strategies to grow sustainable capability across all groups, including those with high potential and ensuring that the strategies tackle the imbalance in diversity

Leadership

- remain visible and approachable to all colleagues and stakeholders
- actively promote the reputation of the organisation with pride, both internally and externally
- display passion and enthusiasm for the work, helping to inspire colleagues and stakeholders to fully engage with the aims and long-term vision
- embed a culture of inclusion and equal opportunity for all, where the diversity of individuals' backgrounds and experiences are valued and respected
- work to influence the strategy, direction and culture to increase effectiveness

Changing and improving

- challenge the way things have always been done and suggest improvements, learning from experience
- seek, encourage and recognise initiative and imaginative ideas from a wide range of people
- promote an environment where all colleagues feel safe to challenge
- encourage measured risk taking and innovation to deliver better approaches and services
- implement changes that transform flexibility, responsiveness and quality of service
- ensure changes add value to the business and express clearly how and why changes are necessary
- lead the transformation towards using digital technologies ensuring full consideration of accessibility needs and the diverse range of end users
- manage change effectively and respond promptly to critical events
- constructively challenge changes which are unhelpful

Managing a quality service

- clarify and articulate the diverse requirements of customers and delivery partners
- use customer insight to drive high quality and efficient service delivery which is a good investment of customer's, member's and taxpayer's money
- work collaboratively with customers and delivery partners to manage, monitor and deliver agreed outcomes
- identify areas for improvement and make appropriate changes to reach professional excellence
- break down complex aims into clear, practical and manageable plans
- identify the resource requirements to support implementation
- ensure risks are monitored and managed to prevent issues with service delivery wherever possible

Communicating and influencing

- implement communication strategies which ensure effective communications are embedded and take account of people's individual needs
- embed a culture where there is a wide-ranging use of the infrastructure in place to support varied communication methods which deliver value for money
- communicate in a straightforward, honest and truthful way with consideration for the impact of the method used

- communicate with conviction and clarity in the face of tough negotiations or challenges
- respect and consider the diversity of the audience when giving messages and deliver these appropriately
- influence external partners, stakeholders and customers successfully securing mutually beneficial outcomes

Changing and improving

- challenge the way things have always been done and suggest improvements, learning from experience
- seek, encourage and recognise initiative and imaginative ideas from a wide range of people
- promote an environment where all colleagues feel safe to challenge
- encourage measured risk taking and innovation to deliver better approaches and services
- implement changes that transform flexibility, responsiveness and quality of service
- ensure changes add value to the business and express clearly how and why changes are necessary
- lead the transformation towards using digital technologies ensuring full consideration of accessibility needs and the diverse range of end users
- manage change effectively and respond promptly to critical events
- constructively challenge changes which are unhelpful

Managing a quality service

- clarify and articulate the diverse requirements of customers and delivery partners
- use customer insight to drive high quality and efficient service delivery which is a good investment of customer's, member's and taxpayer's money
- work collaboratively with customers and delivery partners to manage, monitor and deliver agreed outcomes
- identify areas for improvement and make appropriate changes to reach professional excellence
- break down complex aims into clear, practical and manageable plans
- work collaboratively with customers and delivery partners to manage, monitor and deliver agreed outcomes
- identify areas for improvement and make appropriate changes to reach professional excellence
- break down complex aims into clear, practical and manageable plans
- identify the resource requirements to support implementation
- ensure risks are monitored and managed to prevent issues with service delivery wherever possible

Communicating and influencing

- implement communication strategies which ensure effective communications are embedded and take account of people's individual needs
- embed a culture where there is a wide-ranging use of the infrastructure in place to support varied communication methods which deliver value for money
- communicate in a straightforward, honest and truthful way with consideration for the impact of the method used
- communicate with conviction and clarity in the face of tough negotiations or challenges
- respect and consider the diversity of the audience when giving messages and deliver

these appropriately

- influence external partners, stakeholders and customers successfully securing mutually beneficial outcomes
- constructively challenge changes which are unhelpful

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

At the British Library, we believe that diversity of thought, experience and background enriched our work and strengthens our impact. We are committed to creating a culture where every individual is valued, respected and empowered to contribute fully.

Our leaders play a critical role in fostering this environment by:

- Championing equity and fair treatment in all decisions and practices
- Actively promoting diversity of voices, perspectives and lived experiences
- Building inclusive teams where differences are celebrated and collaboration thrives
- Ensuring that colleagues feel a genuine sense of belonging

We expect all leaders to model these values in their behaviour, decisions and leadership approach, helping to ensure the British Library is a place where everyone can flourish

Person Specification

It is important through your CV and Statement of Suitability that you give evidence and examples of proven experience of each of the selection criteria detailed below. Please also outline your vision for the role and how you propose to approach it if appointed.

| Criteria | To be assessed via | | |
|--|--------------------|---|---|
| | A | T | I |
| Essential | | | |
| A recognised degree level professional qualification in a relevant discipline, or ability to demonstrate substantial professional experience that reflects an equivalent level of knowledge and expertise. | A | | |
| Substantial knowledge of operational service management across a diverse service catalogue, and able to apply those skills and knowledge to the needs of the British Library. | A | | I |
| Substantial experience of leading large multi-cultural services with a track record of successful delivery and service improvement | | | |
| Track record in developing networks and strategic partnerships, to influence and further enhance operational service capacity and capability. | A | | I |
| Experience of overseeing business relationships and customer pathways, including customer care and management of customer feedback, complaints and compliments. | A | | I |
| Up to date appreciation of the potential of new techniques and systems to promote beneficial change, with a proactive approach to identifying and meeting the information needs of internal and external customers. | A | | I |
| Highly developed analytical and interpretive abilities as a basis for advice and recommendation, with outstanding communication skills which enable information to be presented in terms which the layperson would understand and influencing external stakeholders. | | | I |
| Analytical approach to the improvement of procedures and the enhancement of service levels with a commitment to the implementation of best practice. Recognition that improving internal and external customer services is a critical success indicator. | | | I |
| Sound understanding of innovation in public and private sector management, operational management and continuous improvement issues | A | | I |
| Political sensitivity and the ability to achieve progress in a complex political organisation. | A | | I |
| Demonstrated leadership and people management skills, with experience of leading teams through change, driving high performance, and fostering a collaborative culture. | A | T | |
| Ability to communicate and engage and persuade at the highest levels across a broad range of stakeholders. | | | I |

| Dimensions | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Managing People | You will be the head of the Library operations division, leading delivery of major operational functions, overseeing a mix of technical, professional and administrative roles. You will be visible leader demonstrating a significant contribution to complex areas of activity, regularly engaging with colleagues across the organisation to ensure your functions perform as required. |
| Accountability | You will be responsible for performance across significant operational functions. Your advice and input will be critical to the decisions made by the ELT and other bodies, including into potentially sensitive issues. The activity you oversee is a critical functional area of the British Library's operations. |
| Judgement | You will be key decision taker on matters relating to your divisional area and, with SLT, be a member of a leadership team with significant influence over major operations across the British Library. You will deal with some difficult and novel issues, and required to use your individual judgement on matters that may impact our strategic priorities and goals. |
| Influencing | Your role will require influencing of colleagues and partners across the organisation. As a member of SLT, you will have a direct influence on a range of policy areas. You may need to managing external stakeholder relationships to ensure effective delivery of the functions within your division. |
| Professional Competence | You are required to hold degree level professional qualifications or evidence of professional development, commensurate with your experience, which you apply personally and daily on complex and sometimes non-routine work and in the management of the professional work of others |
| Last reviewed date | March 2026 |

