**Role Title:** Chief Operating Officer

**Department:** Early years (Childcare)

**Job Level:** 10

About the role

Lead the Early Years business, ensuring safe and optimised delivery of nursery operations, commercial performance, business development and long-term growth plans to deliver quality, financial, customer, people and member targets in a robustly governed way.

Actively contribute to Early Years strategy and 5-year business plan, working with senior stakeholders, to develop and implement strategies that enhance operational and commercial performance, drive growth, and maintain high standards of care and education.

Engage as a senior leader in National Businesses and the broader Society.

Occasionally role holder may be required to perform other duties or tasks as may be reasonably requested by the Society.

What you’ll be doing

* Accountable for all elements of nursery operations, commercial performance and business development, proactively ensuring robust, structured & timely delivery of commitments and driving continuous improvement
* Contribute to business plan and growth strategy. Implement agreed strategies working with appropriate stakeholders
* Act as Nominated Individual and the primary Ofsted contact, representing and acting on behalf of Midcounties on all matters relating to Ofsted registrations
* Lead full operational strategy & delivery, driving strong child & parent experience, high quality education and operational cost efficiency. Ensure agility and continuous improvement in the context of performance and external environment. Lead improvement initiatives, issue resolution, complaint and whistleblowing investigations.
* Ensure brand & quality standards are fit for purpose, regularly reviewed and delivered
* Accountable for the development and implementation of all policies and programmes, ensuring compliance with EYFS and other prevailing legislation requirements, ensuring full understanding of the requirements as amendments are made. Effectively safeguard all statutory compliance to provide safe and secure environments for children, parents and colleagues.
* Be accountable for safeguarding across the business, pro-actively leading the agenda and managing effective execution across all areas (eg policy, people, infrastructure), including a multi-faceted approach to assessing effectiveness of execution. Ensure statutory safeguarding obligations are met in keeping children safe by establishing and maintaining stringent safer recruitment and on-going suitability to work with children processes. Engage CONB, CEO and Board safeguarding lead on key issues
* Lead creation & delivery of integrated commercial strategy to drive commercial performance and targets delivery, balancing site level activity with estate-wide activity. Ensure continuous improvement & optimisation in response to performance and external context, adopting revenue management and trading techniques alongside strong cost control, leading key initiatives and making the necessary trade-off decisions for optimum outcome.
* Lead creation, delivery & optimisation of proactive multi-channel consumer marketing, PR and content across Brand and tactical activities. Work with broader Midcounties teams on cross-trade initiatives, central PR & reputation management.
* Drive Member-focus and activation, ensuring clear plans and alignment with Midcounties’ Membership strategy
* Deliver wide-spread insight into financial and non-financial business performance, including trends, drivers, best practice and corrective/ optimisation action planning. Regularly benchmark operational and commercial performance and actively identify actions to improve business performance across all dimensions of the business
* Manage P&L to proactively optimise EBITDA delivery, ensuring financial sustainability and profitability of the business. Lead budgeting and ongoing financial forecasting.
* Lead investment planning and maintenance/refurbishment cycle requirements alongside new site investment to ensure nursery standards are maintained in support of business plan delivery. Identify trade-offs to deliver optimum outcome. Build and secure business case sign off for investments, in collaboration with key stakeholders.
* Inspire & lead a high performing team with clear accountabilities and strong performance management. Coach and develop the senior team, empowering and holding them to account, continually reviewing performance against objectives, targets and personal development objectives. Ensure similar approach through the line, overseeing performance management
* Lead People strategy requirements, working with People team, to recruit & retain high quality colleagues. Ensure competitive sector position through benchmarking, identification of improvements and consideration of Midcounties’ overall colleague proposition. Lead colleague engagement, ensuring improvement plans are in place & actioned
* Manage industry and external partner relationships (eg NHS, LAs, sector bodies, workplace nursery partners) , developing a network of insight and contributing to industry bodies
* Work collaboratively within National Businesses and across Midcounties in the best interests of our members
* Define and manage clear BCPs and crisis management plans & processes, integrating with Midcounties’ processes as appropriate. Manage Early years Risk register within Midcounties’ processes
* Lead and embed a culture of compliance across all elements of the business, ensuring that every area of the business complies with statutory obligations as well as Midcounties’ policies & procedures. (eg. EYFS, H&S, training, absence, recruitment etc). Ensure strong Financial controls and adherence to governance, risk & compliance, health & safety, legal and regulatory controls. Ensure all activity is delivered in a safe and timely manner, including on time delivery of audit actions

About You

* Passionate about early childhood education and focussed on needs of children & families.
* Strong leadership, team working and performance management experience essential, along with P&L management, sales & profit optimisation, operational delivery and experience of working in a Group organisation.
* In-depth knowledge of regulatory requirements and industry standards, with proven success in working effectively with OFSTED and other authorities
* Proven Strategic thinker with a hands-on approach. Proven success in delivering both strategic and short-term results in a senior multi-functional leadership position
* Highly numerate, analytical and data driven with drive & curiosity to make a difference. Excellent financial & commercial acumen and proven ability to use multiple data sources to make decisions & deliver results
* Proven success in driving commercial & operational performance in a multi-site environment
* Ability to work under pressure, manage multiple priorities and meet deadlines
* Collaborative style, able to influence at and gain commitment from all levels up to CEO. Engaging & approachable with strong EQ & listening skills. Adept at creating clarity out of ambiguity and complexity

Scope

Reports to: Chief Officer National Businesses

Budgetary Control: P&L accountable- revenue (c£55m), cost and EBITDA

Contacts (internal/external):

Internal- responsible for Early Years management team; Executive & CEO team; COO-equivalent peer group; Finance; People team; full Early Years team; National Businesses leadership team; Property; Board safeguarding liaison; legal & insurance

External- Will need to be able to liaise professionally, effectively and efficiently - Ofsted; Local Authorities; sector bodies such as NDNA; marketing & agencies; media owners; commercial delivery partners; workplace nursery clients; Dfe, external lawyers & advisors