Job description

## Lead AI Engineer

* Grade: PO9
* Reports to: Head of Innovation & Service Design
* Direct reports: Supervisory responsibilities (dependent on project)
* Your team: Digital Strategy & Design
* Service area: Digital Services
* Directorate: Resources

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| Special requirements of the post (delete as applicable) |
| Workstyle: Desk-based worker (Lower presence, one day a week minimum)* Colleagues who are not usually client or customer-facing and can mostly work anywhere with the right technology. Regular on-site activities are required such as team events and collaboration that are more productive face to face
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| This post is subject to the council’s declaration of interest procedure |

## Our mission

Islington is a place rich with diversity and culture. As a council our sense of purpose couldn’t be clearer: we serve. It’s in the logo. We are committed to challenging inequality in the borough and as one of the largest employers we know that to look after the place and the planet, we have to look after our people. **Together we can change the future**.

To do this, everyone who works at Islington Council lives by a set of values which guide us in everything that we do: collaborative, ambitious, resourceful, and empowering. They spell out ‘CARE’, which is what we think public service is all about.

## Overview of the role

The Lead AI Engineer role involves ideating and developing AI projects, writing and reviewing code, and ensuring team performance and skill development. Responsibilities include collaborating with cross-functional teams to understand customer needs, leading the design and deployment of AI products, and promoting best practices in applied AI. The role impacts the organisation by driving innovation, improving service delivery, and maintaining a strong focus on problem-solving and staying updated with the latest AI developments.

## Key responsibilities

* Ideate and develop AI projects, including internally developed applications and services created in collaboration with partners or other service areas.
* Write and review code daily.
* Ensure technical team members perform at their best while continuing to invest in projects and their skill development. Supervise temporarily assigned or shared employees on AI and Smart Automation, including on-the-job training and quality checks.
* Collaborate with cross-functional teams, other service units within Digital Services, and senior stakeholders to understand customer needs and translate them into pragmatic technical solutions leveraging AI.
* Lead the design and establishment of frameworks, tools, and processes to responsibly develop, deploy, and monitor AI products.
* Promote best practices in applied AI across local government.
* Maintain a strong focus on problem-solving and identifying critical paths to impactful solutions.
* Keep abreast of the latest developments in AI, including new models and paradigms.
* Provide strategic direction on AI and Smart Automation technology and investments, ensuring they meet organisation needs, deliver best value, are protected from compromise, and proactively review and improve existing service systems, providing recommendations to Senior Management for enhanced service delivery.
* Research and evaluate new and emerging technologies to advise Senior Management on optimal business solutions.
* Lead the design, testing, and development of innovative AI solutions, establishing detailed AI programme specifications and contributing to Innovation Tests and Minimum Viable Product development.
* Clarify user requirements and convert these into robust solutions.
* Any additional duties consistent with the grade and level of responsibility of this position, for which the holder possesses the required experience and/or training.

### Budget responsibilities

* The post holder may have indirect budget management responsibility to forecast and oversee expenditure against grants funding, central reserves and agreed project budgets.
* Ensure effective Financial Management, cost controls and income maximisation in an ever-changing environment, fluctuating demands, and priorities. Ensure resources are well managed and effectively deployed to the best possible effects assuring value for money in all activities.
* Oversee and manage financial investments in AI and Smart Automation technologies, ensuring optimal value and protection against potential risks.
* The post holder may be responsible for ‘income’ budget targets to support scaling and delivery of technology investments.

### Compliance

* Ensure legal, regulatory and policy compliance under UK GDPR, Health and Safety and in area of your specialism identifying opportunities and risks and escalating where appropriate.
* Ensure compliance with ethical guidelines and legal requirements related to user research and data privacy, providing guidance to the team on best practices and responsible data handling.
* Ensure the technical protection and security of data and technology assets.
* Assure designs are compliant with accessibility guidance and regulation.

## Person specification

Your application form needs to demonstrate how you fulfil the role's requirements. It is essential to address the criteria, as this will be used to evaluate your suitability for the position.

### Essential and desirable criteria

Essential: the basic requirements that must be met for someone to be considered for a particular job. These criteria are mandatory and cannot be negotiated. Essential criteria directly impact the core qualifications or skills necessary to perform the job effectively.

Desirable: the additional qualities, skills, or qualifications that would be advantageous for a candidate to possess but are not mandatory. Not meeting them does not automatically disqualify someone from consideration for the job. This also allows candidates who do not possess certain desirable criteria the opportunity to explain how their other knowledge, experience and skills relate to these and what they may be in the process of doing or willing to do to achieve these.

#### Knowledge, experience, and skills

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| Point | Criteria description | Essential/desirable |
| 1 | **Education & Equivalent Experience**Educated to degree level in a relevant discipline or able to demonstrate equivalent professional experience through work delivered to a comparable standard. | Essential |
| 2 | **AI & Full Stack Engineering Experience**Proven experience in developing AI solutions and/or full stack engineering, including taking ideas through the full software development lifecycle (SDLC) to production. | Essential |
| 3 | **Cloud-Based AI Development**Proficiency in developing and deploying AI solutions in cloud environments such as Azure or AWS, including experience with CI/CD pipelines for cloud and AI agents. | Essential |
| 4 | **Technical Expertise in AI Technologies**Azure AI Foundry, Azure OpenAI, Azure Search, Azure Cognitive Services, Azure Document IntelligenceCopilot Studio and its integration with Azure OpenAI for RAG implementationsAI frameworks and concepts including Large Language Models (LLMs), RAG, Prompt Engineering, and AI Builder | Essential |
| 5 | **Programming & Development Practices**Skilled in one or more programming languages (e.g. Python, C#, JavaScript), with experience using libraries such as Pandas and boto3, and Jupyter notebooks. Familiar with Agile, DevOps, and good coding practices. | Essential |
| 6 | **Integration & Automation**Working knowledge of integrating AI and automation technologies to create end-to-end workflows, including the design and implementation of RESTful APIs and smart automation using Azure OpenAI/Azure Foundry. | Essential |
| 7 | **AI Application Interfaces & Tools**Experience developing and working with tools and interfaces for AI applications, such as Anthropic’s Model Context Protocol, and managing knowledge bases, feedback loops, and RAG pipelines. | Essential |
| 8 | **Infrastructure-Aware Software Design**Ability to design software services that consider infrastructure dependencies (e.g. databases, message queues, cloud environments) and integration with existing systems. | Essential |
| 9 | **Security & Compliance in AI**Understanding of AI security, compliance, and responsible AI practices in the context of enterprise-grade deployments. | Essential |
| 10 | **Cross-Functional Collaboration**Demonstrated ability to coordinate and contribute to multi-skilled project teams across departments, and to work effectively with non-engineering disciplines such as design and user research. | Essential |
| 11 | **Communication & Stakeholder Engagement**Able to explain complex technical concepts clearly to both technical and non-technical audiences, and to prioritise and sequence technical tasks for optimal delivery. | Essential |
| 12 | **Ownership & Delivery Focus**Takes responsibility for outcomes, acquires necessary knowledge to complete tasks, and consistently delivers results with efficiency, quality, and pace. | Essential |

## **Our accreditations**



Our accreditations include: The Mayor’s Good Work Standard, Disability Confident Employer, London Living Wage Employer, Stonewall Diversity Champion, and Employer with Heart.