

The Role	Head Chef
Reporting to	Senior General Manager
Contract	Full time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week
Salary	£40,000 – 45,000 per annum

The Auckland Project

At the heart of our sites is Auckland Palace, the home of the Prince Bishops of Durham and the historic seat of faith and power in the North of England. The experience across our sites is deeply linked to those two themes and are repeated throughout the Palace and its gardens, the Faith Museum and the Mining Art and Spanish Galleries. The collection of our venues, spaces and places invites conversations about belonging, faith, loss, sacrifice, community, love and creativity. We would like our visitors to explore and to discover things about our town, our country and their own lives. We want to create encounters – and need your help to do so.

Welcome to a New Chapter in Bishop Auckland Hospitality

Nestled in the heart of historic Bishop Auckland, our new 3-star-plus hotel offers more than just a place to stay – it provides a warm Northern welcome, genuine hospitality, and a memorable connection to the rich heritage of the region.

Inspired by the legacy of the Prince Bishops of Durham and the centuries of English history that have shaped this remarkable town, the hotel blends comfort, character, and exceptional service. From the moment you arrive, our friendly team is dedicated to ensuring every guest feels valued, relaxed, and truly at home.

At the heart of our food and drink offering is a celebration of local provenance. Our menus showcase the very best produce from County Durham and the Northeast, complemented by seasonal fruit, vegetables, and herbs grown in our own historic walled garden. Fresh, sustainable, and packed with flavour, every dish tells a story of the landscape and people that surround us.

Perfectly positioned for visitors exploring Kynren – the UK's spectacular live-action outdoor show – the hotel serves as a welcoming gateway to the region's past and present. Whether you're discovering the story of England through Kynren, exploring Auckland Palace and its Prince Bishop heritage, or simply enjoying the beauty of the local countryside, you'll find warm welcome, comfortable surroundings, and an authentic taste of the Northeast awaiting you.

The role purpose

We are looking for an enthusiastic, passionate Head Chef with creative flair to join our team predominantly at our brand-new hotel, however you may also support our other catering venues also. Working in conjunction with our Director of Hospitality and Senior General Manager, you will design and cost a brand-new menu in a style of cuisine that will suit our guests. Managing a team of Chefs, you will lead a culture of excellence using fresh, locally sourced ingredients, including produce from our own Walled Garden. This role will be partially customer facing and will require a calm and pleasant persona.

As a key member of the senior team, you will contribute to the delivery of exceptional hospitality; making you a part of an organisation dedicated to the regeneration, conservation and celebration of Bishop Auckland. This will be achieved by maintaining a safe, happy creative workplace founded in professionalism and strong team ethic. As Head Chef, you will ensure the smooth running of the Kitchen and ensure guest satisfaction by providing the highest food quality consistent with cost control and profitability margins.

In return for your dedication and commitment, we offer 30 days annual leave per annum plus 8 bank holidays, and the role is offered on a permanent full-time basis working 5 over 7. Pension scheme available along with free entry to all of The Auckland Project attractions and 10% discount in all food outlets. We also offer an employee assistance program providing support on financial, health and legal issues along with giving discounts on many brands and giving health & wellness advice.

This is a great opportunity for a focused chef to really push on with their career and develop their reputation.

Key Responsibilities

The post-holder is responsible for the following key deliverables and accountabilities:

- To lead and manage an operational kitchen, ensuring excellence in food quality, attention to detail and presentation standards.
- To line manage a team of chefs at all levels across the new hotel including Agency chefs if applicable.
- Smart, well-presented and be capable of remaining professional and calm whilst under pressure
- To manage the ordering, handling, preparation, cooking and serving within the kitchen for the new hotel, whilst ensuring high standards of cleanliness and hygiene.
- To manage budgets, driving profit through appropriate menu development, maximising profit margins, minimising waste and managing stock levels and records. Produce and maintain costing plans for menus.
- To develop and deliver the overall food proposition with seasonal and specials menus which are appropriate for the venue and audience, managing allergens and presentation standards
- Order food stock in line with organisational policy ensuring monthly spend does not exceed budgeted percentage of sales cost. Ensure proper accounting for stock using F&B sales system.
- Ensure the correct rotation of food produced to maintain a high standard of food quality and manage stock
- Ensure all departmental administration is completed in a timely manner, including stock takes, rotas and budgetary analysis.
- To lead on kitchen compliance - Maintaining all food safety and COSHH paperwork, adherence to food laws and implementing across the kitchen team.

- Be vigilant regarding allergy awareness and develop knowledge throughout the team
- Continuously train, mentor and coach the full kitchen team and develop their knowledge, confidence and ability, ensuring mandatory training and personal development plans are implemented.
- Lead performance across the kitchen team by setting objectives and assessing performance against theses. Perform timely one to ones with the whole team. Address underperformance in a timely manner. Seek feedback on own leadership performance to continuously improve.
- Embed full awareness for all menu items, recipes, allergens and presentation standards, specs across the team. Ensure food records are effectively kept and maintained.
- Set operational standards for a kind, progressive and respectful culture.
- To create cost effective rotas, proportionate to anticipated demand with the budgeted staffing costs in mind.
- To develop good relationships with the front of house team, engaging them with new menus to enhance food delivery throughout the Hotel.
- Work closely with the management team to develop the offer and address operational issues.
- Ensure efficient working practises are taking place within the kitchen to ensure high quality food is delivered to guests in an acceptable timeframe.

Reporting Lines and Team Structure

Reporting directly to the Senior General Manager, you will be leading a team of department managers and their teams to deliver an exceptional guest experience that reflects the heritage and cultural positioning of the Auckland Project.

Management responsibilities

The role is responsible for leading, motivating, and developing a high-performing team to achieve operational and strategic objectives. This includes overseeing day-to-day activities, setting clear goals and priorities, managing performance through regular feedback and reviews, and ensuring compliance with company policies and procedures. The role holder will foster a positive and inclusive working environment, support continuous improvement, and collaborate with senior stakeholders to drive effective decision-making and organisational success. You will be responsible for probation reviews, one to one reviews, recording absences and family friendly time off, creating & managing rotas.

Health & Safety

Promote a positive approach to health, safety and accessibility by following TAP policies, procedures and guidelines. Help ensure a safe and supportive environment for visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors at all times.

Person Specification**Essential Criteria****Qualifications**

- An Enhanced DBS check (or be willing to undertake upon appointment)
- A L3 Food Safety certificate (or be willing to undertake upon appointment)

Experience

- At least three years' experience in similar position
- Managerial or supervisory experience
- Experience of writing menus
- A detailed working knowledge of health and safety requirements in relation to a catering environment
- Knowledge of stock management and inventory and cost management
- Logistics management experience
- Ability to multitask, work under pressure and confidently fix problems as they arise
- Ability to work and lead in a team environment
- Professional, hard working with an enthusiastic approach to learning. Be driven and not be afraid of hard work
- Exhibit pride in performance and possess high standards
- Good personal hygiene
- Basic knife skills essential
- Good communication and customer service skills

Knowledge & Skills

- Experience within heritage or destination-led hospitality.
- Knowledge of the County Durham or Northeast tourism market particularly the local market
- Strong communication & interpersonal skills with the ability to multitask in a busy environment
- The ability to lead, train and motivate staff
- Administrative ability and IT literacy.
- Numeracy and financial skills and experience in order to monitor adhere to a budget.
- Ability to work and lead in a team

Personal qualities, attitude and behaviours

- Must be passionate about providing a quality guest experience
- Strong leadership skills
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Attention to detail and accuracy
- A keen interest in local communities and heritage

Desirable Criteria**Qualifications**

- Driver's licence

Experience

- Experience of training and mentoring team members
- Previous experience of working with volunteers
- Experience in carrying out risk assessments

Knowledge & Skills

- Level 2 in numeracy & literacy
- Have logistical skills and the ability to plan ahead
- Excellent time management skills

Employee benefits

We pride ourselves in taking care of our team members. For your efforts we offer 30 days annual leave (plus Bank Holidays), pension contribution, free parking on site, access to staff discounts and local benefits, free unlimited access to our attractions for you and your family (restrictions apply), free access to our staff welfare programme including free medical, legal & financial advice and access to 24-hour counselling along with a large variety of retailer discounts.

The Auckland Project

The Auckland Project works hard to create a positive change for those living, working and visiting Bishop Auckland. We have created a visitor destination in Bishop Auckland, incorporating Auckland Castle (once home to the Prince Bishops of Durham), a Spanish Art Gallery, Faith Museum, Walled Garden, Deer Park, Mining Art Gallery, Auckland Tower visitor centre and Weardale Railway.

We achieve our purpose in three main ways:

- **As a visitor destination** – through our buildings, collections, and natural environment
- **As a centre for learning and skills** – supporting development, education, and opportunity
- **As an asset for Bishop Auckland** – creating spaces and opportunities for community engagement

By working with us, you are helping to ensure the town's future is as magnificent and vibrant as its past.

How to Apply

We're unable to accept CVs as applications. Please complete and submit our application form instead.

Apply for this role by downloading and completing an application form from <https://aucklandproject.org/support-us/jobs/> and emailing this to recruitment@aucklandproject.org

Closing date: Friday 11th September
Expected start date: November 2026

If we receive a large number of applications, we may close the application process earlier than planned.