

RESEARCH AND POLICY OFFICER

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title:	Research and Policy Officer
Reports to:	Research Manager
Location:	London / Hybrid (two days a week in office – EC1V 0JR)
Hours:	Full time (35 hours a week)
Contract:	2-year fixed term contract (extension subject to funding)
Salary:	£37,213 NJC SCP 22 (band 22–27 inc. London Weighting)
Annual leave:	25 days increasing by one day per year up to a maximum of 30 days (+ 2 additional days + birthday leave + office closure between Christmas and New Year, in addition to public bank holidays).
Other benefits:	7% employer pension contribution, cycle to work scheme, annual wellbeing budget and employee wellbeing assistance programme.

Introduction

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) was founded in 1981 to inform and influence public debate on prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners, amidst concerns about a projected prison population of 48,000 by 1984. With the prison population in England and Wales projected to rise to as high as 114,800 by March 2028, the charity remains as important to civic society today as it was then.

Our mission is clear: we are working to create a just, humane and effective prison system by influencing decision makers, opinion formers and the public to 1) reduce the use of prison; 2) improve treatment and conditions for prisoners; and 3) promote equality and human rights in the justice system.

Job purpose

The Research and Policy Officer is a new blended role that reflects the close relationship between PRT's research and policy functions. The successful candidate will play a crucial role in supporting

both activities by helping to deliver research projects that drive policy and legislative change, as well as contributing directly to policy activities through evidence reviews and consultation submissions (functionally line managed by the policy and communications manager). The role will also involve assisting with delivery of the PRT's flagship publication the Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile.

You will have a solid foundation in quantitative and qualitative research methods and some experience of using them in applied research, together with an excellent understanding of the penal system in the UK and the associated research literature. If this sounds like you, you will be joining a reputable organisation with exceptional leadership, extensive networks and a proven track record of promoting evidence-based policy to achieve reform.

Key responsibilities

Research

- Collect, process and manage quantitative and qualitative data from primary research projects. This will periodically involve countrywide travel for prison visits, sometimes overnight.
- Carry out quantitative and qualitative analysis in accordance with agreed research designs and analytical frameworks.
- Support the compilation, management, cleaning and analysis of complex datasets from official sources.
- Assist with the transcription, coding and synthesis of qualitative material.
- Undertake literature reviews and rapid evidence syntheses drawing on academic, policy and practitioner sources.
- Follow established research workflows and quality-assurance processes to ensure outputs are accurate and reliable, including the Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile.
- Support the maintenance of research databases, documentation and project records.
- Assist with the production of research reports, briefings and presentations.
- Contribute to the communication and dissemination of research findings to policymakers, practitioners and the public.
- Support wider research function tasks, including coordinating meetings, stakeholder engagement and general administration.

Policy

- Contribute to consultation responses, parliamentary briefings and other policy-related outputs.
- Conduct desk research and literature reviews to inform policy work
- Assist the Policy and Communications Manager in delivering policy activities.

General responsibilities

- Participate in team meetings and contribute to organisational planning.
- Represent PRT externally where appropriate.
- Undertake administrative tasks necessary for the effective functioning of the Policy, Communications and Research team.
- Carry out any other duties commensurate with the responsibilities of the post.

Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Experience and qualifications	• An undergraduate qualification covering social research methods and criminal justice policy. • Some experience of conducting or supporting applied social research in prisons or related topics, whether through employment, academic study, internships or voluntary work. • Experience of locating, synthesising and critically assessing evidence from a range of sources. • Experience of working with quantitative and qualitative data.	• A postgraduate qualification covering social research methods and criminal justice policy • Experience of contributing to policy work, consultation responses or public affairs activity. • Experience of working with people with lived experience of the criminal justice system. • Experience of working in the voluntary sector, academia or another policy-focused organisation.
Knowledge	• An understanding of prisons, sentencing and the criminal justice system in the UK, together with an interest in current policy debates. • An understanding of how research can contribute to policy and social change.	• Familiarity with criminal justice datasets.
Skills	• Strong analytical and problem-solving skills and the ability to apply agreed methods accurately and consistently. • Competence in processing, cleaning, summarising, visualising and analysing quantitative data. • Competence in processing, transcribing, coding, and analysing qualitative data. • Strong written communication skills, with the ability to present	• Programming skills (Python).

	complex information clearly and accurately to different audiences. • Strong organisational skills and the ability to manage competing priorities and deadlines. • Excellent attention to detail and a commitment to producing high-quality work. • Commitment and ability to conduct all research activities in accordance with relevant ethical standards, data protection requirements, and the Prison Reform Trust's commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion. • Ability to work collaboratively as part of a small team while also taking initiative and working independently. • Good IT skills, including proficiency in Microsoft Office applications and data analysis software packages.	
Personality and behaviour	• Commitment to the Prison Reform Trust's mission and values. • Curiosity, initiative and a willingness to learn. • Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build productive working relationships. • Sensitivity and professionalism when working on issues affecting people in prison and their families.	

Equality and diversity

PRT is an equal opportunities employer. We also have a fair and inclusive culture and seek to reflect the diversity in prisons and the people we represent. If you meet the person specification, we encourage you to apply, and particularly welcome applications from those with Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority backgrounds, (BAME) as we believe these groups may be underrepresented in prison reform work.

PRT is proud to be an inclusive organisation where everyone can contribute, feel valued, and thrive. We believe that people come into our organisation with a unique set of skills, experiences and potential, and we are committed to giving these equal value in everything we do. We strive to create a culture of trust, compassion and respect and hold ourselves to account for the enactment of our values.

We recognise the unique insight and expertise that people with lived experience of the justice system bring to our work. A criminal conviction is not considered a barrier to employment or involvement with PRT. Instead, we actively value lived experience as a strength that enriches our organisation and supports more effective and compassionate reform.

PRT is committed to supporting every member of staff as an individual, providing the reasonable adjustments, resources and flexibility they need to thrive in their role and contribute with confidence.

Safer Recruitment

PRT is committed to open and fair recruitment. We do not ask for disclosure of criminal convictions as part of our application and interview process. Upon offer of employment, following a successful interview, we will request self-disclosure. A DBS check and/or prison security vetting will then take place for this role and a risk assessment will be carried out to determine suitability for the role.

How to apply

Please send your **CV, cover letter** (2 sides A4 maximum) addressing how you meet the above criteria and completed **recruitment monitoring form** to alex.guthrie@prisonreformtrust.org.uk by **5pm on Monday 24th August**.

We must receive all 3 documents to process your application, and we will request any documents not received. Your recruitment monitoring form will be processed separately from your application.

If you would like an informal chat about the role please contact our research manager Sophie Ellis, sophie@prisonreformtrust.org.uk.

Interviews will be on Monday 21st September at our offices at 15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0JR.

Thank you for your interest in working for the Prison Reform Trust.