

Head of policy and advocacy

Job description

Line manager: Chief Executive

Line management responsibilities:

- Policy manager
- Policy researcher
- Press and communications officer

Background

Our vision is a world where data is at the heart of understanding and decision-making.

Founded in 1834, the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) is one of the world's leading organisations advocating for the importance of statistics and data. We're a professional body for all statisticians and data scientists – wherever they may live.

We have more than 12,000 individual members in the UK and across the world. As a charity, we advocate for the key role of statistics and data in society, and work to ensure that policy formulation and decision making are informed by evidence for the public good.

The membership of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) constitutes a preeminent source of statistical expertise. Members work with RSS staff to support our work across areas such as policy development, education, training, statistical communication, and statistical literacy.

Job purpose

The head of policy and advocacy leads a small team of staff who convene RSS members and support them to develop, formalise and communicate the RSS's views on major challenges and policy issues. The team also seeks funding for, and conducts, research to identify and promote relevant changes to the statistical system or government policy.

Key responsibilities

- 1) Leading the RSS's policy work, engaging with RSS membership to extract expert views and develop policy positions
 - Maintaining awareness of political environment and relevant external developments (including announcements, inquiries, consultations and debates)
 - Overseeing media monitoring to identify where the Society's input could add greatest value and potentially bring about the most positive and meaningful reforms
 - Running, and engaging members in, formal horizon scanning processes
 - Managing advisory groups and task forces – providing strategic advice to chairs and overseeing secretariat
 - Leading the team to produce (and writing or editing / coordinating) policy documents and associated materials – consultation responses, position papers, statements, letters and articles
- 2) Leading RSS policy and advocacy campaigns
 - Defining and prioritising campaigns in line with RSS strategy, for approval by relevant groups
 - Developing campaign objectives and planning associated activities in partnership with relevant colleagues across the RSS
 - Establishing and overseeing time-limited groups to achieve policy or campaigns objectives
 - Delivering, and overseeing the delivery of, campaign activities including roundtables, events and development of policy outputs
 - Working with the CEO, developing and reviewing external affairs and engagement strategies
 - Leading RSS advocacy activities – facilitating relationships and implementing and monitoring engagement strategies across the UK Statistics Authority and wider statistical system, the civil service, Parliamentary committees, the research and education communities, potential funders and other relevant organisations
 - Advising and briefing the CEO to inform meetings with senior stakeholders
- 3) Developing the RSS's research pipeline and portfolio of projects
 - Building and maintaining relationships with funders, and collaborating with them to develop ideas for future projects
 - Developing and maintaining a pipeline of possible fundable research projects, extracting ideas from members and wider stakeholders / partners
 - Working with the policy researcher and manager, and head of partnerships, to develop proposals for prioritised new research on a frequency that ensures funding for the team is sustained
 - Overseeing the delivery of research to time and quality, and driving impact of the work through associated activities
- 4) Overseeing the communications, media and press work of the society relating to policy and advocacy
 - Overseeing the work of the press and communications officer
 - Commissioning policy-related content from the content team

- Managing relationships with journalists regarding RSS policy
 - Disseminating and socialising RSS policy and research recommendations to generate impact
 - Representing the RSS externally as required, including contributing to and attending the Society's main external-facing events
 - Ensuring website and other materials are up to date
 - Providing news of relevant policy developments and accomplishments to RSS members, appropriate colleagues and wider stakeholders, to ensure that our policy achievements are understood both by RSS members and the broader public
- 5) General leadership and management of the policy and advocacy function
- Drafting strategy implementation plans and ensuring activity is aligned with organisational strategic priorities
 - Writing reports and making presentations to SMT and Trustees on areas of responsibility
 - Maintaining a tracker to support understanding of the impact of our work, what works, and any learning for future work
 - Monitoring and reporting on progress and performance against targets or key performance indicators to evaluate impact and inform future planning
 - Effectively line managing staff, overseeing performance management to ensure high standards and continuous improvement
 - Project managing initiatives to time and quality, and overseeing wider project delivery within area of work
 - Working across the organisation and programmes to develop our understanding of the needs of our members and partners and embed our policy work where relevant
 - Acting as a specialist advisor to the Society's Vice Presidents, Officers and other Trustees
 - Drafting and monitoring team budgets to ensure activities are delivered to budget; other financial management responsibilities including authorisation of expenditure
 - Managing contracts and agreements with specific providers or partners
 - Working collaboratively to identify and pursue sponsorship and funding opportunities
 - Contributing to the annual RSS conference including delivery of RSS stand and presentations on policy and advocacy
 - Overseeing the monitoring of shared inboxes and ensuring messages are dealt with as appropriate in line with customer service standards
 - Overseeing, developing and maintaining standard operating procedures for all areas of work
 - Leading continuous improvement of the policy and advocacy function
 - Undertaking such other duties as may reasonably be required, consistent with the level and purpose of the role.

Person specification

Qualifications & Professional Background

• Degree or equivalent experience.	Essential
• Significant experience leading policy development within a membership organisation, NGO, professional body, think tank, regulator, or government department.	Essential
• Demonstrable experience managing policy campaigns, influencing decision-makers, and shaping public debate.	Essential
• Proven track record of producing high-quality policy outputs (consultation responses, position papers, statements, briefings).	Essential
• Degree or postgraduate qualification in a numerate / mathematical discipline.	Desirable
• Knowledge of the UK statistical system, data governance, or evidence-based policymaking.	Desirable
• Experience working with or within the civil service, Parliament, or regulatory bodies.	Desirable

Knowledge & Expertise

• Strong understanding of UK political processes, legislative cycles, and public policy development.	Essential
• Ability to interpret complex technical or research material and translate it into clear, compelling policy positions.	Essential
• Knowledge of effective advocacy strategies, stakeholder engagement, and influencing techniques.	Essential
• Understanding of research commissioning, project management, and impact evaluation.	Essential
• Familiarity with issues relating to statistics, data ethics, AI governance, or research funding landscapes.	Desirable
• Understanding of membership engagement and professional standards bodies.	Desirable

Skills & Competencies

• Exceptional written communication skills, with the ability to craft persuasive policy documents, briefings, and public facing materials.	Essential
• Strong verbal communication and presentation skills, including representing an organisation externally at senior levels.	Essential
• Ability to lead horizon scanning, identify emerging issues, and develop strategic responses.	Essential

• Excellent stakeholder management skills, with experience building relationships across government, academia, civil society, and funders.	Essential
• Strong analytical skills and sound political judgement.	Essential
• Ability to manage multiple complex projects simultaneously, ensuring delivery to time and quality.	Essential
• Competence in budget management, financial oversight, and contract management.	Essential
• Ability to lead and motivate a team, supporting professional development and high performance.	Essential
• Media handling experience, including working with journalists or providing expert comment.	Desirable
• Experience developing or implementing organisational strategies.	Desirable

Leadership & Personal Attributes

• Strategic thinker with the ability to translate organisational priorities into actionable plans.	Essential
• Confident leader who can inspire teams, volunteers, and members.	Essential
• Collaborative working style, able to build trust across internal departments and external partners.	Essential
• Ability to work collaboratively on written documents to build consensus.	Essential
• High level of initiative, autonomy, and accountability.	Essential
• Commitment to evidence-based policymaking and the mission of the RSS.	Essential
• Ability to work under pressure, manage competing priorities, and maintain high standards.	Essential
• Strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.	Essential
• Experience supporting or advising trustees, senior executives, or governance committees.	Desirable