



DIRECTOR OF POLICY & RESEARCH

Closing Date: Monday 12th January 2026

Welcome

.Thank you for your interest in joining **Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network** as our next **Director of Policy and Research**. This is a senior leadership role at the heart of Belong’s mission to shape national conversations on cohesion and integration. We are looking for a strategic leader who is passionate about building a more united and less divided society and wants to make a lasting difference to communities.

As Belong enters its next phase of growth, we are determined to deepen our impact, strengthen our resilience, and champion cohesion and integration at scale.

With a strengthened national profile, a bold strategy for the years ahead, and an ambitious Senior Leadership Team, this is an extraordinary time to join us. As Belong enters its next phase of growth, we are determined to deepen our impact, strengthen our resilience, and champion cohesion and integration at scale.

As Director of Policy and Research, you will lead Belong’s policy development, research strategy, and national partnerships that influence change. You will ensure our work is grounded in robust evidence and lived experience, while amplifying Belong’s voice with policymakers and opinion formers.

We are seeking a strategic and insightful leader with deep expertise in policy development and research, who is confident in leading teams, developing evidence-based recommendations and influencing public discourse. You will bring intellectual curiosity, political awareness, a commitment to equity and inclusion and have excellent communication skills - being able to translate complex ideas into accessible messages and build trusted relationships across sectors.

If you thrive in a collaborative leadership role and want to drive systemic change, we would love to hear from you.

Kelly Fowler

Chief Executive Officer, Belong



About Belong

Belong is the UK's leading not for profit network focused on social cohesion. Established in 2019, Belong works across sectors to build a more connected, less divided society by strengthening trust, belonging and resilience in communities.

Belong connects people, places and organisations across the UK to share learning and best practice on cohesion and integration. Working with local and national partners, we build capacity to lead and deliver change, and amplify what works through research, policy and a strong collective voice. Belong's growing membership spans local authorities, charities, civil society and business.

Belong Delivers:

- Place-based cohesion and intercultural work with local authorities, communities and partners
- Research and policy to build the evidence base and influence national change
- Training, consultancy and leadership development
- Knowledge sharing, networks, learning events and thought leadership

Belong is collaborative, evidence-led and learning-driven, celebrating the benefits of diversity and operating within an equalities framework. Belong is independent, professional, transparent and committed to convening bold conversations to move beyond differences, strengthen social bonds and building common ground.



Our Team

At Belong, our team is united by a shared commitment to creating a more inclusive and connected society. We bring together a diverse group of professionals with backgrounds in research, community engagement, communications, facilitation and policy.

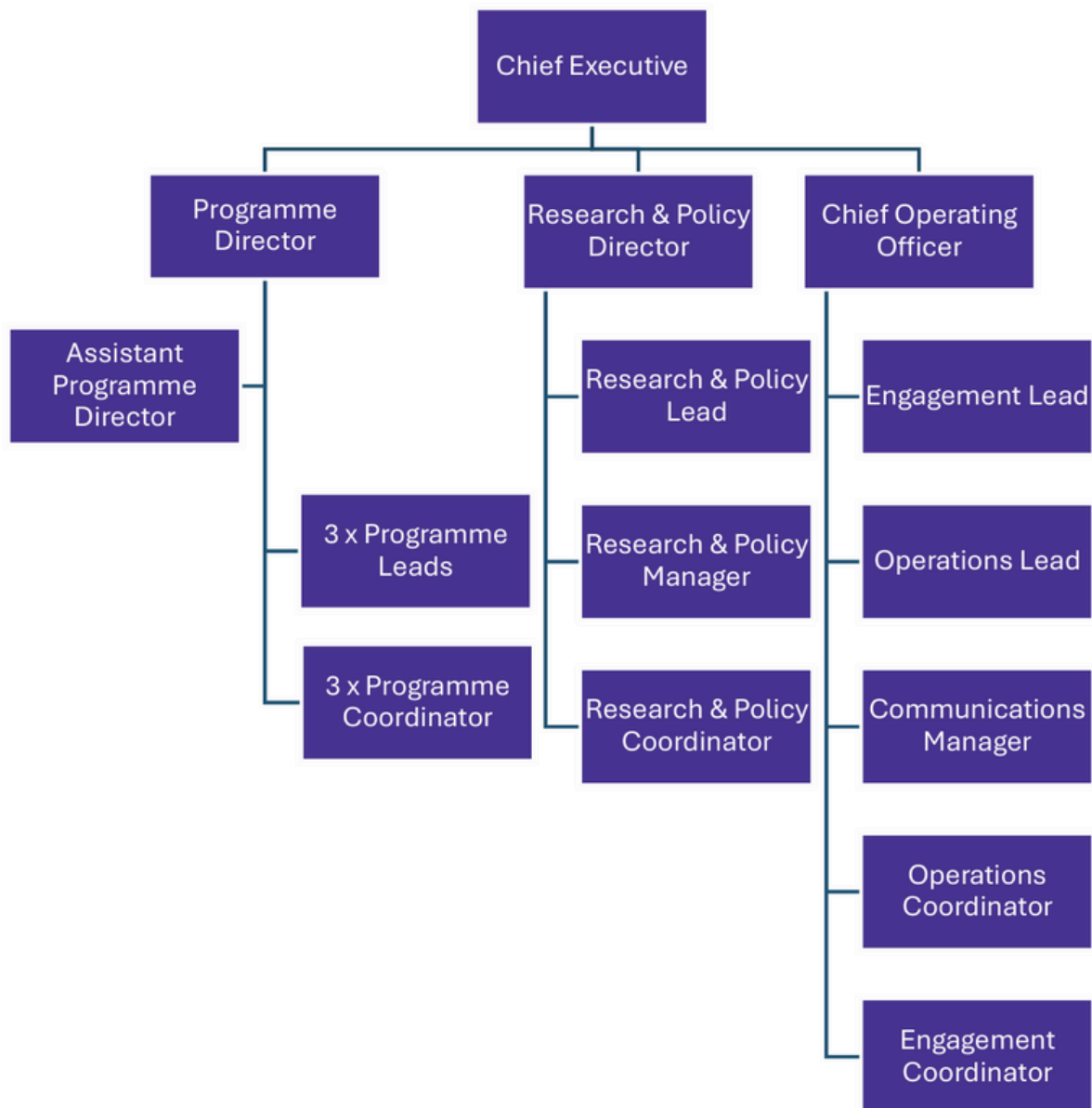
We work collaboratively with local authorities, civil society organisations, academic institutions and national partners to strengthen social cohesion across the UK. Whether we're delivering training, supporting place-based strategies, or leading pioneering research into what helps communities thrive, our team is driven by the belief that stronger, kinder and more connected communities benefit us all.

Benefits

- 30 days' annual leave per year
- 3% pension contribution
- Hybrid working (typical pattern of 3 days in the office)
- Enhanced Sick Pay
- Enhanced Maternity and Paternity Pay



Staff Structure



About the Role

Job title: Director of Policy & Research

Working hours: Full time

Location: UK wide with regular travel across England and Wales

Contract type: Permanent

Salary: £65,000-£70,000

You will lead Belong's policy and research agenda, ensuring alignment with organisational strategy and impact at national level.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Policy & Research Leadership

- Lead the development of Belong's policy and research agenda, ensuring alignment with organisational strategy
- Produce high-quality policy outputs including reports, briefings, consultation responses and thought leadership pieces
- Ensure Belong's research is rigorous, inclusive and informed by lived experience
- Oversee the design and delivery of research projects, including commissioning and partnership work
- Translate research findings into actionable policy recommendations and advocacy strategies
- Foster strong collaboration between the Programme Delivery team and the Policy & Research team, ensuring that insights from Belong's delivery continuously inform research priorities, while research findings actively shape programme design and implementation.

Influencing & Communications

- Build and maintain relationships with policymakers, parliamentarians, journalists and opinion formers
- Represent Belong externally at high-level meetings, events and in the media
- Develop strategic messaging and narratives that amplify Belong's impact and reach
- Collaborate with the communications team to inform public affairs strategy and ensure policy work is effectively disseminated
- Support campaigns and public engagement initiatives that promote Belong's policy goals

Key Responsibilities

Organisational Development

- Contribute to Belong's strategic planning and senior leadership decision-making
- Line manage policy and research staff, providing support, supervision and development
- Collaborate with the Director of Programmes to ensure alignment between delivery and influencing work
- Play an active role supporting income generation through proposal development and funder identification and engagement
- Uphold Belong's values and commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion

Note: This list is indicative and not exhaustive. The post holder may be required to undertake additional duties in line with the role

About You

We are seeking a strategic and insightful leader with:

- Proven experience in policy development and research leadership
- Experience working in or with government, think tanks or advocacy organisations
- A strong understanding of social policy and influencing processes
- Knowledge of cohesion, integration and community relations and development
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Experience in media engagement and public speaking
- Ability to translate complex research into accessible policy messages
- Familiarity with participatory and applied research methods
- Strong strategic thinking and planning abilities
- Relevant qualification in public policy, social research or related field
- Experience in managing teams and budgets
- Experience in fundraising and proposal development

Personal Qualities

- Passionate about improving cohesion and integration in the UK
- Strategic and visionary thinker
- Collaborative and inclusive leader
- Politically astute and intellectually curious
- Practical, focused and reliable
- Committed to personal and professional development



The Application Process

Deadline: 23:59pm, Monday 12th January 2026

First interviews: 29th & 30th January, online

Second interviews: 12th February, in-person

How to apply

To apply, please submit your CV and a word document containing answers to the below questions to recruitment@belongnetwork.co.uk with the subject line 'Application to the role of Director of Policy & Research.'

- Why are you interested in applying and how do you feel your personal values align with our mission?
- What are the key achievements and outcomes within your career that make you a strong candidate for the role?
- How does your leadership style support others in their growth and create a positive environment for empowerment?

Please respond to each of the questions with a maximum of 400 words per answer. If you have any questions or would like to arrange an initial, informal discussion about the role, please contact recruitment@belongnetwork.co.uk.

If you think you have what it takes to fulfil this role but aren't sure you meet every point on the person specification, please still get in touch. We'd love to have a chat and see if you could help us to create a lasting difference.



 belongnetwork.co.uk

 linkedin.com/the-belong-network

 twitter.com/BelongNetwork

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