



POLICY AND RESEARCH LEAD

Closing Date: Monday 12TH January 2026

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining **Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network** as our next **Policy and Research Lead**. This is an exciting opportunity to lead high-impact projects that shape national conversations on cohesion and integration. We are looking for someone who thrives in a collaborative environment and is passionate about creating lasting change through evidence and policy.

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.

The ideal candidate will be a strategic and thoughtful leader with a strong track record in policy and research, who is confident in managing complex projects, producing high-quality outputs and engaging with a range of stakeholders. You will bring intellectual curiosity, political awareness and a commitment to equity and inclusion, as well as possessing strong communications skills and the ability to translate evidence into action and contribute to Belong's thought leadership. If this sounds like you, and you are excited to help shape Belong's future while driving positive change across the UK, we would be delighted to hear from you.

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.

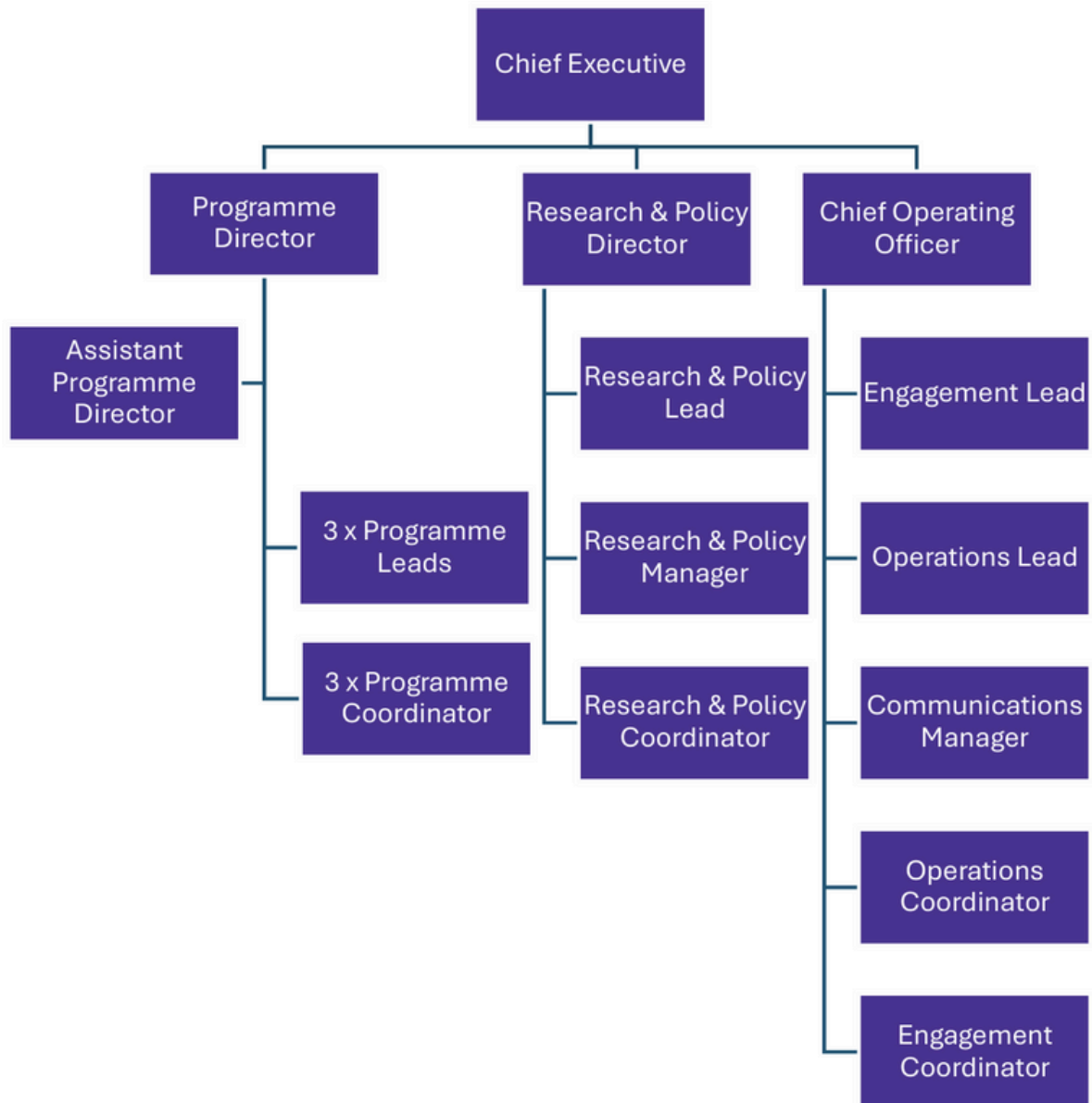
We work collaboratively with local authorities, civil society organisations, academic institutions and national partners to strengthen social cohesion across the UK. Whether we're delivering training, supporting place-based strategies, or leading pioneering research into what helps communities thrive,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

Benefits

- 30 days annual leave per year (plus bank holidays)
- Hybrid working
- Enhanced Sick Pay
- Enhanced Maternity and Paternity Pay



Staff Structure



About the Role

Job title: Policy & Research Lead

Working hours: full time

Location: UK wide with regular travel

Contract type: Permanent

Salary: £55,000–£60,000

You will design and deliver research and policy projects that inform practice and influence decision-makers.

Key Responsibilities

Policy and Research Leadership

- Lead the design and delivery of policy and research projects, ensuring quality, relevance and impact
- Produce policy briefings, reports, consultation responses and thought leadership pieces
- Translate research findings into actionable recommendations for policymakers and practitioners
- Ensure projects are inclusive, participatory and informed by lived experience
- Monitor policy developments and contribute to strategic positioning and horizon scanning

Stakeholder Engagement

- Build and maintain relationships with policymakers, researchers, funders and sector leaders
- Represent Belong at external meetings, events and networks
- Support collaborative research and policy initiatives with partners and commissioners
- Contribute to the dissemination of Belong's work through events, media and digital channels

Internal Tasks

- Support the Director of Policy & Research in developing Belong's policy influencing strategy
- Contribute to organisational learning and cross-team collaboration
- Assist with proposal development and funder engagement
- Line manage junior staff or associates as required

About You

We are seeking a strategic and thoughtful leader with:

- Proven experience in leading policy and applied research programmes
- Experience working in or with government, think tanks or advocacy organisations
- Strong analytical and writing skills
- Knowledge of cohesion, integration and community development
- Excellent project management and organisational abilities
- Familiarity with participatory and inclusive research methods
- Experience in income generation or bid development
- Relevant qualification in public policy, social research or related field
- Ability to translate complex ideas into accessible messages
- Politically aware and intellectually curious
- Strong stakeholder engagement and relationship-building skills

Personal Qualities

- Passionate about improving cohesion and integration in the UK
- Strategic and solutions-focused
- Collaborative and inclusive
- Practical, reliable and detail-oriented
- Committed to personal and professional development
- Able to thrive in a fast-paced and evolving environment



The Application Process

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

First interviews: 5th & 6th February, online

Second interviews: 13th February, online




How to apply

To apply, please submit your CV and cover letter detailing how you meet the person specification to recruitment@belongnetwork.co.uk with the email subject line 'Application to the role of Policy & Research Lead.'

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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