

Job description

Position: Research Officer

Reporting to: Research Manager

Salary: L13 £39,493 - £39,832 per annum

Hours per week: 37.5 hours per week

The Health Foundation

We are an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK.

Our aim is a healthier population, supported by high quality health care that can be equitably accessed. We learn what works to make people's lives healthier and improve the health care system. From giving grants to those working at the front line to carrying out research and policy analysis, we shine a light on how to make successful change happen.

We make links between the knowledge we gain from working with those delivering health and health care and our research and analysis. Our aspiration is to create a virtuous circle, using what we know works on the ground to inform effective policymaking and vice versa. We believe good health and health care are key to a flourishing society. Through sharing what we learn, collaborating with others and building people's skills and knowledge, we aim to make a difference and contribute to a healthier population.

Background

The Foundation achieves its objective through a combination of traditional grant-making activity, commissioning of research and fellowships, in-house research and data analytics, and a range of related activities to support individuals stay well, support staff in the service to improve care and support policy-makers to make better policy decisions. Our 2019-21 strategic plan sets out four priority areas where we want to see real change.

These are:

- Promote healthy lives for all
- Understand the quality of health and care
- Support healthcare improvement
- Make health and care services more sustainable

Our operational budget is in the region of £37m per year - of this approximately 82% is direct spend on charitable objectives. Direct spend includes expenditure on grants for projects to improve health and health care across the UK, research awards and commissioned evaluations. More information about the Health Foundation and its activities can be found on our website at www.health.org.uk

Research

Research is central to the work of the Health Foundation, and comprises a mix of in-house and externally awarded and commissioned programmes.

The research team is responsible for running a varied and ambitious portfolio of externally commissioned research and evaluation work, which places a strong emphasis on building the evidence base for improving people's health, understanding the quality of health and care, making health and care more sustainable, and improving health care delivery.

We aim for the research and evaluation work we commission to have wide impact on policy and practice, and influence the future direction and planning of the Health Foundation's work. The portfolio encompasses independent evaluations, evidence reviews, original research awards, and knowledge mobilisation activities to explore what works to improve health, health care and social care.

Job Purpose

The Research Officer is a key member of the Research team, working to ensure research commissioning and grant management processes are carried out to the highest standard to support the delivery and dissemination of research. Key responsibilities of the role include:

- Supporting the design, delivery and management of our award programmes and research commissions, working closely with the relevant Research Manager and the rest of the team
- Working as a member of a team to design and continuously improve high quality processes across our research portfolio.
- Working with colleagues to disseminate research and capture learning generated through our research funding, building strong, productive relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

The post holder will be able to work as part of a team, have a proactive approach, and be comfortable with working with high levels of delegated responsibility. It is essential therefore that you are able to work effectively both independently and within a team; ensuring good lines of communication across multiple complex programmes of work.

Responsibilities

Supporting the design, delivery and management of research programmes and commissions

Working with Research Managers, apply established and innovative programme management principles to ensure the design and delivery of a large and complex portfolio of activities. This will include:

- Supporting the Research Manager to scope, develop and deliver research programmes, including developing timelines; planning and monitoring progress and budgets; coordinating inputs from across the team and the wider organisation; and identifying and highlighting risks and potential mitigations.
- Working with the communication team to ensure smooth flow of high quality internal and external communications around our programmes and projects.
- Leading the development of application and selection materials and processes for award holders including:

- supporting the Research Manager in designing the selection workflow
- producing high quality and externally facing selection documentation and associated materials
- building and testing of selection processes on our online application portal (AIMS)
- providing first line AIMS support to internal and external stakeholders
- Managing selection and assessment processes to ensure selection of high quality award holders and research providers including:
 - supporting the Research Manager and wider team to undertake initial internal assessment of applications
 - managing and developing a network of external assessors
 - leading the organisation of shortlisting, interviews and site visits
- Actively managing and monitoring a caseload of awards and contracts, including:
 - preparing contracts for sign off to an agreed template dealing with variations and contractual requirements
 - monitoring budgets, checking and confirming invoices and scheduling payments
 - liaising with award holders to understand progress and support needs
 - preparing and sharing progress updates and key learnings and impact with a variety of audiences, as required
 - Organising and managing advisory group meetings including all practical arrangements, preparing supporting paper work and taking minutes
- Organising, managing and attending events, such as seminars, learning events or round tables, with responsibility for all practical arrangements including liaising with participants and speakers, developing materials, venue selection, catering and ensuring overall value for money and smooth running on the day.
- Undertaking ad hoc research on specific topics as required.
- Taking responsibility for regular reflection on current processes, taking action to continuously improve ways of working

Contributing to the Health Foundation’s knowledge development and information systems including:

- Inputting and managing data on the organisation wide systems and databases and acting as a source of information and advice.
- Identifying areas for improvement and driving the development of existing knowledge and information systems especially relevant to awards and project management.
- Working closely with the communications team, to maintain stakeholder intelligence in support of award making and our wider influencing work.
- Acting as content manager for the intranet and website. Working with the communication team to keep material up-to-date by drafting, collating and uploading content
- Maintaining, and where necessary developing, standard briefing materials for programme areas (including presentation materials) in order to support external communications.

- Actively support the team in ensuring compliance with General Data Protection Regulations

Working as a member of a team to provide high quality support across all our programmes and projects:

- Coordinating post programme reviews to identify areas for improvement in our processes for future schemes.
- Support the team in developing the Research Strategy by working to develop a robust operating framework for commissioning and managing research
- Developing an in depth understanding of the work of the Health Foundation, working with award holders and Research team colleagues, to understand challenges and successes and being confident about talking about these with external stakeholders.
- To carry out any other related duties as requested.

Person specification

Knowledge and experience

- Experience of working within a busy team while working under pressure and managing competing priorities
- Demonstrable project management experience, including the development of new ideas alongside critical review and improvement of existing ways of working
- Experience of research portfolio management, including tendering and contracting processes, and managing and monitoring a caseload of awards and contracts
- Experience of managing meetings and events, including sourcing and booking of venues, managing practical arrangements and contributing to event design, supporting paperwork and actions
- Experience and enthusiasm for improving processes in a busy work environment

Skills and Abilities

- Excellent interpersonal and team working skills with the ability to build strong productive relationships with stakeholders
- Solid organisational, prioritisation and time management skills with the proven ability to coordinate and deliver multiple projects simultaneously
- Ability to work effectively and proactively under pressure and to tight deadlines with good attention to detail and high standards of accuracy
- Effective communication skills, both written and oral
- Ability to gather, analyse and synthesize key information and learning from a variety of sources
- Excellent numerical skills with a solid understanding of how to analyse and review budgets
- Strong IT skills including sound knowledge of MS Office as well as the ability to learn new systems quickly
- Commitment to equality and diversity in all aspects of the Foundation's activities and service delivery.

Desirable

- Experience of a research secretariat role or function
- Formal project management qualification
- Experience of working in a grant making organisation and / or research / academic sector
- An interest in, and a desire to contribute to the improvement of health and health care in the UK