

Head of Policy

Term: Permanent

Salary: £50,000-£60,000

Reporting to: Director of Strategy and Innovation

Location: We would prefer that our Head of Policy is based at either our Birmingham or Leeds hub. However, we will not discount applications from candidates whose preference is to be based at our London hub. (You will be asked to indicate your preferred hub when applying.) We are currently working virtually, but when restrictions are lifted it is likely that you will be required to work up to 3 days per week at your chosen hub (2 of these days will be specified by us). You must also be prepared to travel to our other hub locations across England requiring up to six overnight stays per year of 1-2 nights each.

Deadline: 1st November 2020

Transforming youth employment

The Youth Futures Foundation is a new, independent, not for profit organisation set up to tackle youth unemployment with a £90million endowment from the Reclaim Fund. We are looking for bold and impactful ways to help young people find and keep good jobs. There are over 750,000 young people not in education or employment in the UK. Young people are twice as likely to be unemployed than older adults in the labour market and BAME and disadvantaged young people disproportionately bear the brunt of it.

We are building an 'empowerment foundation' to identify practical solutions that work in a complex world yet are simple and cost effective enough to roll out across multiple locations, to reach as many young people as possible. Youth Futures will apply rigorous evaluation methods to determine what works, then channel resources and funding into sharing learnings and working in partnership to grow good practice. We recognise that whilst developing and supporting young people will go some way towards tackling youth unemployment and under employment, these are systemic issues. We are seeking a significant change in national behaviour that dramatically improves the number of young people accessing - and progressing in - work.

The Youth Futures Foundation is committed to:

- a) **Equipping young people from diverse backgrounds to access and progress in work**
- b) **Removing structural and systemic barriers to employment and progression**

Youth Futures will take an evidence led structural and systems-based approach that recognises the importance of national learnings and local context, as well as promoting strong coordination and partnership working across government, funders, delivery organisations and employers.

We will work in partnership to close the employment gap by:

- ✓ **Building the evidence base**
- ✓ **Understanding and highlighting structural and systemic barriers**
- ✓ **Improving the quality of employment programmes for young people**
- ✓ **Empowering government to carry out evidence-based policy making**
- ✓ **Equipping employers to improve productivity through hiring the best talent**

Job Description

We are looking for a Head of Policy to work closely with the Director of Strategy & Innovation, the Head of Strategy, and other colleagues to support the development of and contribute to YFF's evidence-based policy work. This is a pivotal role to help deliver the Youth Futures mission in a long term, sustainable way to improve the lives of this and future generations.

This is a role for a creative and visionary executive – with the ability and energy to think differently, to develop and implement cutting edge but practical solutions to a highly complex problem.

The ideal candidate will be able to apply their excellent knowledge of policy areas such as children and young people, employment or social justice. They will demonstrate a proven ability to synthesise and communicate complex policy issues. They will have an excellent understanding of the processes and procedures of Parliament, Whitehall and devolved governments. They will also possess strong organisational, relationship-building, project management, report writing and influencing skills, as well as a proven background of problem-solving and involvement in large-scale projects.

We are looking for someone who will be adept at identifying, augmenting, and championing effective approaches to getting young people into work, from national policy ideas to city wide partnerships or scalable local projects. Ideas may come through our portfolio of grantees (led by the Director of Grants and Investment), research into what works (led by the Director of Evidence and Impact), or through applying insights and learnings from practical discovery and co-creation with key external stakeholders. Using these insights to develop new concepts and build a groundswell of support for change will be key to transforming the youth employment ecosystem.

You will embrace and champion our commitment to achieving systemic change, determine the focus areas of the Youth Futures Foundation, inspire others to join with us, and strategically direct internal and external resources towards activities that will have the greatest impact for young people over the long term

The Strategy & Innovation Team will form the core ideas and innovation engine within the Youth Futures Foundation. It is designed to a) determine and own our organisational viewpoint on youth employment and b) create the future-looking big ideas that will most transform youth employment over the next 10 years.

Key responsibilities

- Work with the Director of Strategy & Innovation to develop and deliver a cutting-edge policy agenda and stakeholder outreach strategy
- Identify and seize opportunities for influencing public policy at a national, local and regional level to improve the employment outcomes of young people, particularly from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds
- Work in partnership with young people, employers, funders and government to collectively develop and champion effective approaches to bring about transformational change
- Overseeing a wide range of high quality written outputs for various audiences including well evidenced, targeted research reports, policy briefings, blogs, consultation responses, government facing communications and tenders
- Planning and running speaking events and policy seminars, identifying further opportunities for external profile raising
- Representing Youth Futures Foundation at internal and external speaking events

- Establishing, promoting and maintaining strong relationships across all the political parties and Whitehall, strengthening Youth Futures Foundation’s reputation as a respected source of analysis and ideas
- Developing strong partnerships with relevant peer organisations and stakeholders in the young people and employment sectors
- Ensure the Youth Futures Foundation has a strong awareness and understanding of the education, youth and employment policy landscapes
- Working with the communications team to maintain and grow our external profile during relevant policy debates, hone our messaging and increase our visibility across all media
- Identify, analyse, synthesise and interpret information necessary for strategic choice-making and assessment of trade-offs, highlighting the critical choices, hypotheses and assumptions the Leadership Team and Board should be aware of.
- Line-management responsibility for a Policy Officer
- Support, coach and develop a team of people who are split across three different locations.
- As a leader in a newly forming organisation, fully contribute to:
 - developing the overall strategy of Youth Futures Foundation
 - creating a positive and effective culture within the organisation
 - organisational development; developing new roles and ways of working; recruiting and developing new team members
 - supporting the team of Directors to become fully established and operational
 - establishing YFF’s reputation as a force for good in the Youth Employment sector
- Actively develop the skills within YFF to utilise influencing, policy and advocacy to achieve our goals.

Skills and Experience

Part One – Knowledge and Experience

- Significant experience in a senior policy role in a relevant organisation, such as youth opportunities, employment support or a relevant government department
- A demonstrable understanding of current key debates and priorities in the youth employment space
- With the ability to remain politically neutral, you will possess a deep understanding of the UK political environment and the operation of government gained in policy or influencing role within a comparable sector
- Demonstrable track record of solutions-oriented convening and partnership working
- Adept at identifying, augmenting, and championing effective approaches to getting young people into work, from national policy ideas to city wide partnerships or scalable local projects.
- Significant experience of policy development and national level influencing in a complex multi-stakeholder environment
- Ability to analyse legislation and policy and frame and position organisational lines
- Demonstrable experience of developing and delivering proactive and reactive influencing strategies, ensuring buy-in from key stakeholders
- Credible experience of working with very high-level decision makers to achieve positive outcomes
- Understanding of the contexts, structures and levers for national and local influencing in achieving change in youth employment
- Experience of building relationships and facilitating meetings with a range of stakeholders to identify issues, trends and collect information for developing evidence-based policy

- Experience of drafting a variety of written materials for internal and external audiences (e.g. briefings, reports and/or responses to government consultations)
- Experience of working closely with government departments to achieve policy change

Part Two - Skills

- Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills that cut through complexity and provide insight
- Effective research and information gathering skills
- Exceptional communication skills, both written and oral -
- Able to establish priorities and manage a complex workload to meet tight deadlines
- Good project management skills; ability to coordinate complex and multiple projects
- Creative skills for contributing new and innovative ideas
- Comfortable working in a fast-paced, evidence-based, and applied environment
- Good ICT skills including Microsoft Office, spreadsheet use and database management.
- Excellent time management and organisational skills.
- To role model positive leadership attributes that demonstrate alignment with YFF values and behaviours and embed equal opportunities and diversity values and objectives.

Mindset

- This is an exciting opportunity in a newly-forming organisation. As such, many of the systems and processes that are normal in an established organisation either do not exist or are newly forming. To be successful in this role, the candidate will need:
 - to thrive when operating in uncertainty
 - to take a proactive and flexible approach, able to identify and take forward opportunities and work effectively in partnership with others.
 - to have a positive and can-do attitude, willing to roll their sleeves up to get into details where necessary
 - to collaborate internally and externally to achieve our mission
 - to have strong leadership communication skills
 - to be a 'completer-finisher'
 - to have a relentless focus on impact
 - to be curious
 - to have a commitment to excellence

Things to know

- As part of Youth Futures Foundation's safeguarding policy, all employees are subject to a basic Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check