

Job Advert: Head of Research

The Pensions Policy Institute (PPI) is the UK's leading independent authority on pensions and retirement policy. We conduct rigorous, impartial research and analysis from an evidence-based, long-term perspective. Our work is used by government and across Westminster, and by industry and consumer groups. It informs major decisions that affect millions of people's lives in retirement.

The Role

We are seeking a Head of Research with a demonstrable track record of managing teams and research projects from conception to publication. This is a key senior role, responsible for a small newly integrated team which combines modelling, analytical, and policy research skills. The successful candidate will oversee research projects, maintain our reputation for quality research, provide subject matter expertise, and liaise with stakeholders.

PPI Research Work Programme

The PPI undertakes a number of different kinds of research through its annual work programme, which is developed by the Deputy Director, in consultation with the Head of Research. Research may be directly commissioned or be the result of research areas developed by the PPI, for which funding has been secured from sponsors or grant funders.

The Head of Research needs to maintain an impartial point of view to fit with the PPI's non-political, fact-based stance.

Location

As many of our team members and stakeholders are London-based, maintaining a regular presence in London is essential, both for effective collaboration and relationship-building, and for attending meetings and events. The contractual place of work for this role is our Central London office on the Strand, though the PPI operates a hybrid model. All staff are required to attend the office for project or team meetings and to be present for PPI launch events.

This role comes with additional attendance requirements at external meetings and events, which in total equates to approximately twice a week, on average. We are happy to explore flexible working arrangements that support both the organisation's needs and the successful candidate's preferences. The role is intended to be full-time, although we welcome conversations about how flexibility can be accommodated within that arrangement.

Employee Benefits:

- 25 days annual leave plus Christmas closure
- Membership of the PPI's Group Personal Pension (initial 8% employer contribution with an additional matching contribution for every 1% employee contribution up to 4%)
- Group Income Protection and Life Assurance
- Continued professional development
- Payment of professional membership fees
- Employee Assistance Care Programme
- Carers leave
- Leave for volunteering

Diversity and Inclusion

We aim to build, develop, and retain a talented workforce that represents a variety of backgrounds, skills, and experiences. We welcome and actively encourage applications from anyone who feels they would be a good fit for our organisation, regardless of race, religion, colour, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, neurodiversity, or any other protected characteristics.

Application process

We want the recruitment process to give you the opportunity to share your skills and experience, and to find out more about the PPI. Before applying you are welcome to get in touch and arrange an informal chat, please email recruitment@pensionspolicyinstitute.org.uk.

Closing date for applications:

We review applications on a rolling basis and encourage early applications, as candidates who meet the essential criteria may be invited to interview before the vacancy closes. **Closing date: 02 October 2026.**

Interviews

There is a possibility of earlier interviews for applicants who meet the essential criteria. **Scheduled Interviews to take place during October 2026.**

Please inform us if you intend to be away during this period.

How to apply

If you are interested in applying, you must refer to the full job description and essential criteria and apply through the link to Spider Recruitment. You will need a CV detailing your work experience and a cover letter (no more than two A4 sides) telling us:

- How you meet the responsibilities and criteria required for the role.
- Your motivation for applying for the role and how you would benefit the PPI.
- Your notice period.

Please note that applications submitted without a cover letter will **not** be considered for shortlisting. Apply here <https://jobs.spiderrecruit.co.uk/jobs/head-of-research-london/4895-1/>

As part of the recruitment process you will be asked to submit two samples of your written work and to complete an assessment and an exercise.

We can accept videos or recordings for those who have difficulty typing.

If you require any reasonable adjustments during this recruitment process, please get in touch to discuss this in more detail.

The successful candidate will be required to provide evidence of the right to work in the UK and two referees. One should be the current/most recent employer and/or prior employer but they will not be contacted without prior consent.

The PPI takes the security of your data seriously. It has internal policies and controls in place to ensure that your data is not lost, accidentally destroyed, misused, or disclosed, and is not accessed except by our employees in the proper performance of their duties.

For further information or a conversation about the role before applying visit www.pensionspolicyinstitute.org.uk or Email recruitment@pensionspolicyinstitute.org.uk.

Job Description: Head of Research

Team:	Research Team
Direct reports:	Senior Policy Researchers, Policy Researcher, Senior Policy Analysts, Policy Analyst, Research Associates
Reports to:	Deputy Director
Contract Type:	Permanent
Salary:	£65k depending on skills and experience

Responsibilities

- Leading the Research team with direct line management of research staff and oversight of Research Associates:
 - Workload management
 - Support / mentoring
 - Appraisals / on-going reviews
 - Development / training plans
 - Resource availability
- Coordinating workloads and priorities across the research team, ensuring efficient deployment of analytical, modelling, and policy research capacity across all projects.
- Fostering a collaborative, unified research environment in which analysts and policy researchers work as a team, sharing knowledge, methods and insight to deliver coherent and high-quality outputs.
- Encouraging cross-disciplinary learning, joint problem-solving, and a strong team culture built around shared ownership of research projects.
- The management and production of PPI research projects:
 - Utilising the PPI project management tools to ensure the timely delivery of quality outputs by the research team members.
 - Ensuring that modelling and analytical work is fully integrated with policy research, including shared planning, consistent interpretation, and alignment of analysis with project objectives.
 - Ensuring that research findings across all publications are communicated coherently and brought together into a single integrated narrative.
 - Supporting the Deputy Director in upholding PPI's quality standards by ensuring the team follows internal quality processes consistently and by escalating issues requiring final QA to the Deputy Director or Director.
- Working closely with the External Relations Team on dissemination activities.
- Working closely with the Deputy Director, who leads the overall Research Programme, to translate strategic priorities into deliverable research plans and clear project schedules.
- Producing research scopes and Request for Proposals (RFP) and grant bids and working with external sources to secure project funding.

- Participating in internal and external discussion groups, workshops, and seminars on pensions policy issues including presenting PPI research.
- Representing the PPI at events and conferences, and in discussions with Government, the pensions industry, and other stakeholders.
- Building relationships with stakeholders and the academic community and contributing to maintaining and developing the PPI's profile.

Please note that the above list is not exhaustive, and you will be expected to undertake additional duties and responsibilities as and when required.

Essential qualifications and knowledge for this post:

- A postgraduate degree (Master's or PhD) in social policy, economics, public policy, social science or other related field or equivalent experience.
- Sound knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- A working knowledge of the UK pension system (or the ability to acquire this knowledge quickly).

Essential skills required for this post include:

- Experience of managing small teams and contractors.
- Proven high-quality research skills, including desk and internet research, and the ability to lead research projects in a pro-active way.
- Proven ability to interpret statistics/modelling results (the candidate is not expected to undertake modelling or handle large data sets themselves).
- Excellent report-writing and data presentation skills, drafting for public, or non-technical, readers in plain English.
- Experience of reviewing research reports and communicating feedback effectively.
- Experience of presenting research findings in seminars or conferences.
- Experience of managing multiple projects and juggling priorities.
- Good project management, organisational and time management skills.
- Good interpersonal skills and leadership skills and demonstrable team player qualities.

Desirable skills required for this post include:

- Highly developed networking skills, including experience of building relationships with funders and stakeholders.
- Established networks within the social policy research community, government departments, or the financial services industry.
- Track record of securing research funding, writing successful project or grant proposals and managing contracts.
- Ability to mentor and coach individuals.

Personal Qualities

- Commitment to the PPI's independent, impartial, evidence-based approach to research.
- Attention to detail and a commitment to producing high-quality outputs.

- Clear and confident communicator.
- Positive, organised, proactive and solution-focused approach.
- The ability to think strategically, navigate uncertainty and adapt to evolving situations.
- Willingness to contribute broadly within a small team.