

Recruitment pack

Policy officer vacancy

About the role

This is an exciting opportunity for an ambitious and determined individual with a track record of influencing policy to achieve real change.

The policy officer role is a new post created to support the charity's work to reform policy and legislation to reduce the stigma and discrimination that people with criminal records face. With a focus on reforming the criminal records regime, the policy officer will build on Unlock's recent work – including successful legal intervention in the Supreme Court, the #FairChecks movement and work on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – to influence policy makers and key stakeholders to secure changes to legislation and government policy.

The role also includes supporting the development of Unlock's strategy of using the law for achieving change in policy, as well as building on the charity's previous research to develop a strategy that strengthens the evidence-base for changes in policies and practices that will have a positive impact on the lives of people we exist to help.

Unlock

We are an **independent, highly respected social inclusion charity** based in Maidstone, Kent. Established in 2000, we provide a **voice and support for people with convictions** who are facing stigma and obstacles because of their criminal record, often long after they have served their sentence.

Firstly, **we help people**. We provide information, advice and support to people with convictions, including running an information site and confidential peer-run helpline. We help practitioners support people with convictions by providing criminal record disclosure training. And we support employers and universities in treating people with criminal records fairly.

Secondly, **we advocate for change**, working at policy level to address systemic and structural issues. We listen to and consult with people with criminal records, undertake research and produce evidence-based reports to inform policy makers and the public. We challenge bad practice, influence attitudes and speak truth to power. We co-founded and support the Ban the Box campaign and we are pushing for reform of the criminal records regime.

We have seven staff (nine including this and another vacancy we currently have), with 2-3 volunteers each day that support the running of our highly-regarded confidential peer-run helpline.

Unlock is an equal opportunities organisation and committed to increasing diversity. Applications from candidates who are BME, have a disability or who are from a less privileged background are particularly encouraged. We warmly welcome applications from all suitably skilled people regardless of background and we are especially keen to appoint people who have themselves met with and overcome the disadvantages of having a criminal record. A past criminal record is **not a requirement** for this role but **nor is it a bar**.

Salary and terms

£28,366 per annum. Full time, 2 year fixed term contract with potential for extension.

Home-based, with visits to the Maidstone office as and when required, with a minimum of 6 per year.

Job description

Job title: Policy officer
Reporting to: Co-director responsible for policy
Working with: Policy and practice lead, Advice manager

The role

The policy officer role supports Unlock's work to address systemic barriers, stigma and discrimination that people with criminal records face. It will involve working across a number of different policy strands, but with a particular focus on our work to reform legislation and government policy on the criminal records disclosure regime. Building on Unlock's recent work – including a successful legal intervention in the Supreme Court, the #FairChecks movement and work on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – the post holder will work to influence policy makers and key stakeholders to secure changes that benefit people we exist for.

The role includes developing our policy positions and voice, ensuring that we are listening to the challenges that people with criminal records are facing and ensuring there is a strong evidence-base for our recommendations for change.

The role involves assisting with the development of Unlock's strategy of using the law to achieve change in policy, as well as working with colleagues to build on the charity's previous research to develop a strategy that strengthens the evidence-base for changes in policies and practices that will have a positive impact on the lives of people we exist to help. The role will ensure that what we do is presented in an engaging and persuasive way to policy makers and relevant stakeholders.

Main responsibilities and tasks

- Draft policy papers and briefings, ensuring that they are informed by research and analysis, and are accessible to the relevant audiences.
- Produce briefings, blogs, reports and guidance for parliamentarians, policy makers and other stakeholders.
- Identify opportunities to input into consultations and lead on drafting responses.
- Monitor Parliament, government and statutory agencies for legislation, consultations and policy developments relevant to Unlock.
- Assist in the development and implementation of influencing strategies, including dissemination of policy outputs to key audiences.
- Develop and maintain a map of influential stakeholders and maintain those relationships alongside colleagues, including government officials in the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and other government departments, ministers and decision-makers in other relevant bodies including the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Work with the co-director responsible for policy to develop and implement Unlock's strategy of using the law to achieve change in policy.
- Collate, analyse and present data and research that supports our policy priorities.
- Assist with the development of a research strategy that contributes to the evidence and debate on policies and practices that will have a positive impact on the lives of people we exist to help.
- Support the policy and practice lead on policy issues that overlap with access to employment and higher education.

- Ensure that the experiences of people with a criminal record effectively inform our approach to understanding and addressing issues at a policy level.
- Represent Unlock externally in policy groups, amongst policy-makers and government officials.
- Develop, maintain and update internal processes for demonstrating impact of our influencing work to support reporting to existing funders and provide an evidence base for future work (e.g. internal reports, monitoring statistics, case studies, emerging issues and trends).
- Engage in policy work as required on issues that are directly related to problems that people face because of their criminal record.
- Work with the digital and communications manager to develop content for the website and other external communications (including social media) that inform key stakeholders about our policy work and what our key messages are.
- Contribute towards media work relating to policy and influencing work (including drafting of press releases and comments/responses to external developments).
- Assist in any other reasonable duties as required.

Person specification

As this is a new role, below is what we think are essential (e) and desirable (D) to deliver on the main tasks and responsibilities. Shortlisting will be based on the criteria set out below but we're keen to hear from you if you think you have other relevant skills, abilities and experience that can help us achieve the objectives of this role.

Experience

- Relevant work experience (E)
- Confident in developing policy positions on behalf of an organisation (D)
- Holding and developing relationships with government officials and policy makers (D)
- Experience of influencing policy at a strategic level (D)
- Experience of analysing primary and secondary sources of evidence (qualitative and quantitative) and developing recommendations for policy and practice (D)

Knowledge

- Good knowledge of policy making and parliamentary processes (E)
- Understanding of the criminal records disclosure regime (D)
- Understanding of using the law to influence change (D)

Skills and abilities

- Excellent communication skills with the ability to write clearly and persuasively and very good oral presentation skills (E)
- Able to research, write and publish information aimed at a wide range of stakeholders (E)
- Ability to build positive relationships, working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to affect change, including supporting, influencing and challenging where appropriate (E)
- Ability to work remotely as part of a small team with minimal supervision and self-motivated to excel (E)
- Ability to prioritise effectively and to manage a large and varied workload with competing priorities (E)
- Excellent IT skills, including MS Word, Excel, Outlook, internet use and digital communication tools (Slack, Teams, Zoom) (E)
- Ability to use own initiative to develop innovative solutions to problems (E)
- A self-starter with the ability and initiative to take activities forward and continually strive to improve and be successful (E)
- Willing to travel within England and to work outside office hours on occasion (E)

Qualifications

- Degree or equivalent in social policy or related subject (D)

Attitudes and values

- Ambitious person that has a passion for making a positive difference and challenging inequality (E)
- Energetic and innovative in approach (E)
- Highly motivated, positive and a can-do attitude to solving practical problems (E)
- A confident, outgoing person (E)
- Commitment to Unlock's aims, values and approach (E)
- Willing to work flexibly and develop the role to best meet the needs of a developing charity (E)

Terms of employment

1. **Contract:** Full time, 2 year fixed term contract with potential for extension.
2. **Hours:** 37.5 hours. Normal hours are 9am to 5pm but we will consider flexible working requests. Occasional work outside of contracted hours may be necessary.
3. **Location:** Home-based, with visits to the Maidstone office as and when required, with a minimum of 6 per year. The role will also require travel to external meetings, mostly in London.
4. **Holidays:** 20 days (with an additional day for each complete year served) + public holidays + 3 days between Christmas and New Year.
5. **Pension:** Automatic enrolment into Unlock's contributory workplace pension scheme into which we contribute 6% of gross pay.
6. **Probationary period:** 6 months.

Unlock is committed to fair recruitment and the inclusion of applicants with criminal records. This position is covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. For this role, the disclosure of a criminal record is not required. Applicants can make a voluntary disclosure if they wish, either to demonstrate their ability to do the role or to seek support for any ongoing restrictions (for example, exclusion zones, conditions around internet use or contact with the Public Protection Unit). This can take place at interview or offer stage. See our ['Applicants with a criminal record'](#) policy for more information.

How to apply

To apply for the role:

1. Download the job application form from www.unlock.org.uk/2020recruitment.
2. Send your completed application along with a covering letter (telling us about what you do currently and why you think you are suitable for this role) and an equal opportunities form by email to admin@unlock.org.uk (with the subject line 'Policy officer vacancy'). As our offices are currently closed due to Covid-19, we are unable to accept postal applications.

We shortlist candidates by matching details on your application against the person specification for the role so please make sure your personal statement in the application form carefully addresses this. We're looking for clear evidence of your experience, skills and knowledge and we're interested in all relevant experience, including beyond paid employment, which might contribute to your ability to do the job.

Closing date for applications is 10am, Wednesday 8th July 2020. Shortlisted and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email by Tuesday 14th July. Due to our limited resources we are unable to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications.

Interviews are due to take place on Tuesday 21st July 2020. We expect this will be via video conferencing but we will review how we approach the interview process nearer the time and will aim to be as flexible as possible.

If you would like an informal discussion about the role before you apply, you can contact Christopher Stacey, co-director, at christopher.stacey@unlock.org.uk to arrange.

If you have any questions about the application form or application process, please email admin@unlock.org.uk.