

Careers in Local Government Research

June 2017



As the largest employer in England, local government provides a wealth of research and analytical career opportunities. Local government is responsible for many essential services and a research career in this sector is an opportunity for you to contribute to the wellbeing and development of local communities. High quality research skills are key to councils because the ability to gather evidence and apply analysis is fundamental to success.

Background

Local government is all about meeting the needs of local people and businesses. Its role touches on every aspect of modern life and ranges from climate change to adult social care. Researchers might work in a specialist field or across a range of topics, but in either case will find that their work will have a direct impact on policy and practice. There are also opportunities to work with central government, research institutions and other agencies, private sector consultancies and voluntary organisations.

Possible employers

Research jobs in local government can be in a range of settings, such as:

- local councils
- research units jointly funded by several councils
- county or local observatories
- local government bodies (like the Local Government Association's research and information team).

Outside local government, in the private sector, a number of large research organisations have local government teams (who specialise in conducting work for local government) within their social research unit.

Typical research activities

Local government research is varied and provides opportunities to work on a wide range of projects using a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Typical activities could include:

- analysing the wealth of data held by local authorities and their partners, to help them improve their service delivery
- analysing and presenting performance data in an easily understandable way
- developing and conducting research projects, for example, surveys of residents or clients
- synthesising and interpreting research and analysis to inform authorities about the latest evidence and learning for the services they deliver
- producing briefing papers and reports
- commissioning and managing research.

Finding local government research jobs

In general, local councils advertise their vacancies individually. The main source of adverts is the broadsheets (for example the 'Guardian' and the 'Times') and their own websites. In addition, councils may use www.lgjobs.com.

LARIA (the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association) supports local researchers in the public sector. It exists to promote the role and practice of research within the field of local government and provide a supportive network for those conducting or commissioning research. Vacancies available within member authorities are listed here: <http://laria.org.uk/professional-development/jobs/>.

As well as appearing in the broadsheets, jobs with the Local Government Association's (LGA) research and information team are advertised on their own website, at: <https://www.jobtrain.co.uk/lga/Vacancies.aspx>.

Jobs with large research organisations that may have a local government team, appear in the broadsheets and on the Social Research Association's vacancies page: <http://jobs.the-sra.org.uk/>.

In addition there may well be opportunities for employment within the local authority public health services area

Other local government jobs

Although not specifically for researchers, the LGA's National Graduate Development Programme is designed to fast track the career of graduates with vision and creative thinking, to help them become a senior manager in local government as quickly as possible. For more information visit: <http://www.local.gov.uk/ngdp>



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