

Job Description

Post title	Principal Policy and Insights Lead (Skills & Employment)
Grade	SM1
Directorate	Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform
Team	Skills Policy, Strategy and Insights
Reporting to	Head of Skills Policy, Strategy and Insights
Responsible for	2 x Policy Advisors (Skills & Employment) 1 x Data and Policy Officer (Skills & Employment)

Job Purpose

The Principal Policy and Insights Lead for skills and employment will play a pivotal role in the development of policy, strategy and evidence bases relating to devolved skills provision, career development, technical/vocational education pathways, and workforce/occupational needs. The postholder will act as a senior strategic adviser within the wider Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform directorate, shaping long-term strategic direction and the North East MSA's role within the evolving landscape of English devolution. The postholder will act as the directorate lead for skills policy, leading the development of high-impact policy and strategy across complex agendas, ensuring the MSA's senior officers are equipped with the insight, analysis, and strategic advice needed to drive the region's human capital ambitions.

This is an integral leadership role within the Skills Policy, Strategy and Insights Service, leading and taking accountability for the policy arm, focussing on: scanning the horizon for emerging opportunities and risks; preparing for and interpreting major events and political announcements; and positioning the MSA to influence national skills and employment policy, secure further devolution, and strengthen the region's voice.

The postholder will lead and shape skills policy development from inception through to implementation, ensuring coherence across the directorate and working closely with internal stakeholders, external partners and key regional influencers. The role will build and maintain senior relationships across government departments, local authorities, education providers, employers, business/employer representative bodies and wider partners. Through these relationships, the postholder will help strengthen the organisation's strategic influence, champion the region's interests, and help define where the MSA goes next in relation to human capital.

Duties and responsibilities

Skills Devolution Policy:

- Advise senior officers on the future of skills devolution spanning across 14-19 technical pathways, 16+ skills provision, lifelong learning entitlements, workforce development, sector skills pathways and growth, employment support, and the organisation's strategic direction on human capital.
- Provide authoritative insight on the national devolution landscape, Whitehall policy shifts and their implications for the region.
- Work with colleagues across the MSA to lead the development of the MSA's skills devolution strategy, including negotiating positions and policy proposals. This includes leading the development of compelling cases for further powers, funding and flexibilities, positioning the MSA as a credible and influential partner to government.
- Translate strategic direction set by the Head of Service into strategic and operational frameworks, plans and delivery across the service area.

Policy Development, Analysis, Horizon Scanning and Strategic Positioning

- Work with colleagues across the directorate and the wider MSA to co-ordinate the directorate representations into and response to major fiscal events (e.g. Spending Reviews, Spring and Autumn Statements), providing rapid analysis and strategic advice on complex national policy.
- Interpret national skills, education, employment and economic inclusion policy and assess implications for the region's funding, powers, and strategic priorities.
- Develop strategic responses and influencing strategies to shape government decisions affecting the regions human capital needs and ambitions.
- Lead horizon scanning to identify emerging trends, risks, and opportunities across education, skills, employment support, economic inclusion, workforce development and careers.
- Lead the design of high-impact, cross-cutting skills policy that spans multiple portfolios and partners, ensuring effective implementation of policy into practice and measurable outcomes.

Senior Stakeholder Engagement and Influence

- Build and maintain strong, strategic relationships with government departments, local authorities, education and skills providers, employers and wider partners.
- Represent the MSA at senior skills and employment forums, negotiations, and policy discussions, ensuring the region's interests are clearly articulated and understood.
- Act as a trusted senior point of contact for external partners seeking to engage with the MSA on strategic skills and employment matters.

Leadership, Management, and Corporate Contribution

- Provide visible, confident leadership to the Skills Policy function, setting high standards for high quality insights, strategic thinking, and partnership working.
- Manage the development and operation of a Skills Policy Team and support the development of a cohesive, high-functioning Policy, Strategy and Insights Service.
- Develop new and improved approaches where existing frameworks are insufficient to address departmental and/or organisational needs.
- Manage and develop employees, fostering a high-performing and collaborative team.
- Contribute to corporate leadership, modelling the organisation's values and supporting cross-organisational initiatives and priorities.
- Work closely with the Principal Skills Strategy Lead and the wider Skills and Employability directorate to ensure integration of strategy and policy development into the delivery of skills provision, careers and workforce development activity, economic inclusion and growth initiatives, technical/vocational pathways, and vice versa.

Organisational responsibilities

- **Communication**

We communicate effectively with our peers, partners and local authorities and work collaboratively to provide the best possible outcomes. Communication between teams, services and partner organisations is imperative in providing the best possible service to the region.

- **Confidentiality**

All members of staff are required to undertake that they will not divulge to anyone personal and/or confidential information to which they may have access during the course of their work.

All members of staff must be aware that they have explicit responsibility for the confidentiality and security of information received and imported in the course of work and in using organisation information assets.

- **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

We take responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing in accordance with the North East MSA Health and Safety policy and procedures.

- **Performance Management**

We promote a culture whereby performance management is ingrained, and the highest of standards and performance are achieved by all. You will contribute to the organisation's appraisal processes to ensure continuous learning and improvement and to increase organisational performance.

All members of staff will receive appraisals, and it is the responsibility of each member of staff to follow guidance on the appraisal process.

The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by their manager.

Values and Behaviours

Our values and behaviours are the things that are important to us, individually and as a team. They articulate the way we want to conduct ourselves. Combined, they work together to make us who we are, and we use them to anchor all that we do. The North East MSA values are:

- Strive for brilliance.
- One team.
- Drive sustainability.
- Make it happen.
- Be inclusive.

Equalities and Diversity

We are committed to creating a fairer North East where everyone can thrive with aspirational jobs, new skills, and better homes. All employees are responsible for taking proactive steps to eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunities and foster good relationships in every aspect of their work.

Special requirements of post

- **DBS**

This post is not subject to a disclosure.

- **Politically restricted**

The North East MSA has designated that this post is not politically restricted in accordance with the requirement of section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and by regulations made from time to time by the Secretary of State.

Person Specification: Principal Policy and Insights Lead (Skills & Employment)

The following criteria will be used to shortlist at the application stage and will be further explored at the interview stage.

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Degree and/or equivalent experience of working in public policy, skills, careers, education or a related field.	
Experience	- Experience leading complex policy and strategy development in a political or public sector environment. - Demonstrable experience of engaging and building relationships with senior stakeholders from across the public sector, private sector, and education. - Experience and/or knowledge of skills delivery, employment support and economic inclusion and the national, regional and local policy landscape. - Experience in analysing data and gathering high quality quantitative and qualitative evidence to demonstrate impact. - Experience interpreting major fiscal events and government statements, policies and announcements (Budget, Spending Review, Autumn Statement) and translating them into place-based strategic implications. - Experience leading horizon scanning, futures analysis, and long-term strategic planning. - Evidence of producing high-quality strategic insight, analysis, and briefings in fast-paced, politically sensitive contexts.	- Experience working within or in partnership with a Mayoral Strategic/Combined Authority, Local Authority, central government or similar authority. - Experience in policy or strategy development related to skills, employment support, education, economic inclusion or a relevant sector. - Experience managing and developing employees and leading high-performing teams.
Skills and Knowledge	Strong understanding of English devolution, local government structures, and national policy making processes.	

	• A demonstrable understanding of 16+ skills provision and needs including technical and vocational pathways, further education, higher education and lifelong learning. • A strong track record of stakeholder engagement and management and of communicating with a variety of audiences, preferably in skills, careers or education. • An understanding of relevant local and national policy relating to careers, skills, education, economic inclusion and workforce development. • Exceptional strategic thinking and analytical skills, with the ability to synthesise complex information into clear, compelling advice. • Strong political awareness and sound judgement, with the ability to navigate ambiguity and sensitive issues. • Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to produce concise, impactful policy products and strategic narratives. • Ability to build and maintain strong relationships with senior stakeholders across government, the private sector, academic institutions and the wider system. • Ability to lead complex, cross-departmental projects and drive work from concept through to implementation. • Strong organisational skills, with the ability to manage competing priorities and deliver under pressure. • Strong digital skills and experience of using a range of Microsoft Office Applications.	• Advanced analytical skills, including the use of evidence, data, and modelling to inform policy. • An understanding of the interdependencies between economic development and human capital needs, challenges and opportunities. • An understanding of the issues and barriers to employment, education and training faced by young people and economically inactive adults, and barriers to recruitment faced by industry.
Personal Qualities	• Enthusiastic and proactive with a genuine commitment to public value, inclusive growth, and improving outcomes for residents and communities. • Curious, forward-looking, and proactive in identifying future trends, risks, and opportunities. • Resilient, adaptable, and comfortable working in a dynamic political environment. • Committed to partnership working with key stakeholders including internal colleagues, partners and key regional and national influencers. • Committed to continuous improvement, learning and professional development. • Committed to the principles of equality and diversity. • Values-driven, with a commitment to integrity, transparency, and high professional standards.	• Ability to work flexibly with occasional out-of-office-hours commitments linked to political or strategic events. • Willingness to travel within the region and to central government hubs as required.