

## BUILDING PLACES AND SPACES

## Policy officer



Policy is an ideal career for someone academically inclined who wants to put their brains to practical use. Policy officers are the strategists who define what should happen, why and how, whether in central or local government, in a pressure group, charity or think tank. The job is a combination of research, analysis and advice – usually in a specialised area. An environmental policy officer, for example, might keep a council's managers informed about trends and legislation, understand how the council's activities are affecting the environment and recommend improvements. It involves not just strategic thought but confident and convincing presentation of your ideas.

## Degree needed

No specific degree is needed. However, most policy officers are educated to postgraduate level and have strong research skills; many will have studied for a doctorate. Degrees in social studies, public management, economics or politics are all relevant. Employers will look for strong evidence of statistical analysis and social research skills.

## Good courses

- BSc in Social Policy (School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol)
- MSc in Public Management (University of Birmingham)
- MSc or MRes (Master of Research) in Public Policy and Management (Birkbeck, University of London)



Lucie Keeley at work  
Policy Assistant, Leicestershire County Council



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Your career – our future

## Facts and figures

## Starting salary

A typical starting salary is £23,175.

## Working hours

Normal office hours.

## Days' holiday per year

A minimum of 25 days.

## Skills and experience

This is a role where analytical skills are crucial – not just number-crunching, but understanding the facts and trends behind the numbers, why they are relevant and what factors are likely to influence them.

## Would suit

Someone who is academically inclined but wants to apply those skills in a practical context.

## Likely employer types

- Local authorities
- Government departments and agencies
- Regeneration bodies and regional development agencies
- Large charities
- Campaigning organisations and pressure groups
- Think tanks
- Universities and research institutes

## How many jobs available?

There is a wide range of roles available, but few organisations employ more than a handful of policy staff.

## Number of people employed in this field

No national figures are available.



Meet the expert  
Lucie Keeley,  
Leicestershire  
County Council

Visit [AskWhatIf.co.uk](http://AskWhatIf.co.uk) to watch video diaries and get opinions from other real people doing real jobs.



## Did you know?

The Royal Institute of International Affairs, the think tank known as Chatham House, is famous for the often-quoted 'Chatham House Rule', designed to enable people to speak their mind on policy issues without attribution. It reads: 'When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.'

## More information

- The University of Birmingham hosts the largest centre for the study of public policy and management in Europe [www.publicpolicy.bham.ac.uk](http://www.publicpolicy.bham.ac.uk)
- The University of London careers group has information and case studies on careers in public policy [www.careers.lon.ac.uk](http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk)
- For examples of the kind of internships available in policy research, see [www.ippr.org.uk](http://www.ippr.org.uk)

"It's about putting strategy to practical use. I have to think outside of the box if I'm going to put policies forward that will make things happen."