



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



Department of Public Administration and Policy  
Research Fellow

## **Role summary**

The Department of Public Administration and Policy is seeking to appoint a research fellow to examine the research culture of local authorities in England.

You will work with the research project Principal Investigator, Dr Jason Lowther, and colleagues in NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) Sandwell. The HDRC aims to transform the research culture and infrastructure across Sandwell Council so that their work is evidence-informed, robustly evaluated, and reflects the needs and values of local communities. This six month project includes a systematic literature review, complemented by analysis of recent research in the council, and further interviews in other HDRCs / councils.

## **Role description**

The responsibilities may include the following:

- Develop research objectives and proposals for research.
- Collect research data; this may be through a variety of research methods, such as scientific experimentation, literature reviews, and research interviews
- Analyse and interpret data
- Apply knowledge in a way which develops new intellectual understanding
- Disseminate research findings for publication, research seminars etc
- Supervise students on research related work and provide guidance to PhD students where appropriate to the discipline
- Contribute to developing new models, techniques and methods
- Undertake management/administration arising from research
- Contribute to Departmental research-related activities and research-related administration
- Present research outputs, including drafting academic publications or parts thereof, for example at seminars and as posters
- Deal with problems that may affect the achievement of research objectives and deadlines
- Promote equality and values diversity acting as a role model and fostering an inclusive working culture.

## **Person Specification**

- A PhD (or near to completion) in public policy or a related field
- Experience in conducting a literature review
- Experience in thematic qualitative analysis of interviews (ideally using Nvivo)
- An interest in and/or experience of working in local government (ideally)
- High level analytical capability
- Ability to communicate complex information clearly
- Ability to assess resource requirements and use resources effectively
- Understanding of and ability to contribute to broader management
- Ability to contribute to the planning and organising of the research project
- Able to co-ordinate own work with others to avoid conflict or duplication of effort
- Knowledge of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, and how to actively ensure in day to day activity in own area that those with protected characteristics are treated equally and fairly.

<b>Full/part time</b>	Full time
<b>Duration of post</b>	Fixed term (6 months)
<b>Post is open to</b>	Internal and External candidates
<b>Grade</b>	Research Fellow
<b>Salary</b>	Competitive for an outstanding candidate
<b>Closing date</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2025

Please quote job reference **105694** in all enquiries.

## **Informal Enquiries**

Dr Jason Lowther  
Head of the Department of Public Administration and Policy (DPAP) [j.lowther@bham.ac.uk](mailto:j.lowther@bham.ac.uk)

## The Research Culture Project

The Research Culture project examines how local authorities understand and use research evidence, and specifically to answer these questions:

- What are the key features of research culture in local authorities?
- What types of evidence and research are used by local authorities?
- How are these used?

The project will position Sandwell in comparison with other local authorities by comparing the results of the literature review with findings from a programme of interviews with Sandwell senior managers and staff surveys on research culture in the council and city.

Current research offers only a limited understanding of how evidence is used at the local level. Most studies have concentrated on the international or state level rather than local policy or practice (Durrant et al., 2023). A recent systematic review of qualitative studies on evidence use in health policymaking revealed that only 24% of 319 published studies addressed local-level policymaking (Verboom and Baumann, 2022, p. 893). This is important because evidence utilisation at the local level appears to have unique characteristics. For instance, Petticrew et al. (2004, p. 814) found that 'local compared with national needs for evidence were different, and so evidence at a local, micro level was often required in addition to evidence that provided a national picture' when examining evidence use in health policymaking.

The relationship between evidence and policy at the local level has been described as political, contested, and nuanced (Boaz and Davies, 2019), as well as values-driven (Cairney, 2019). Local Government necessitates specific approaches to evidence use (Cheetham et al., 2022). Often, evidence that aligns with local political beliefs and can support cross-organisational goals is considered most useful by local decision-makers, and political considerations and public perceptions influence elected members' policymaking (Kneale et al., 2017). Existing research on evidence use in policy also tends to focus on appointed officials rather than politicians (Verboom and Baumann, 2022). This research explicitly examines the research culture and perceptions of evidence for policymaking among actors involved in local policymaking, including politicians.

The Research Fellow will take a leading role in the literature review and co-authoring resulting academic and policy papers. If there is time, further interviews may be conducted in other localities.

### **The Department of Public Administration and Policy (DPAP)**

The overarching goal of the [Department of Public Administration and Policy](#) is to be a leading hub for impactful research, innovative teaching, and active policy engagement, driving social change and preparing future public servants through a dynamic interface between academia and practice.

Our vision is to:

- Be a well-recognised hub for collaboration and challenge in public administration and policy
- Facilitate interdisciplinary co-production of research and policy
- Combine local embeddedness with international inclusion and diversity to address global sustainability challenges

DPAP's research priorities include smart, sustainable and creative approaches to policy challenges; co-production of policy and service delivery; democratic participation and social innovation; artificial intelligence; governance, institutional design and leadership; and policy-making, implementation and service delivery.

### **NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) Sandwell**

Sandwell Council has been awarded £5 million funding from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to establish a Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC). [Sandwell HDRC](#) is a 5-year partnership between the Council, the University of Birmingham and the voluntary sector, working with wider partners and stakeholders across the borough and region and aligning to our borough-wide Levelling Up Programme.

HDRCs focus on the wide range of factors, outside of health care, that influence people's physical and mental health. These factors are known as the wider determinants of health. They include how polluted the air is on your street, the quality of your accommodation, if you own a car, how good the schools are and whether you have a job.

The HDRC will improve how we carry out research, how we use it to make decisions and how we communicate findings to others. This will help to improve the quality of the services we deliver and commission, and improve the health and wellbeing of all our residents.

Sandwell HDRC, Better Research for Better Health, is one of 11 new HDRCs launched in 2024 and is one of 30 HDRCs across the UK.

## **The School of Government**

The School of Government is a diverse and inclusive community committed to education and research that makes a difference to our city, region, country, and the world. Proud to be part of the UK's first civic university, and committed to the values of a democratic society, we believe the study of governance and politics helps us better understand the most pressing local and global challenges and contribute to finding solutions.

The School represents one of the UK's largest concentrations of academics, researchers and students focused on government and governance from the local to the global. Our work spans from the study of local democracy in the Department of Public Administration and Policy (DPAP), incorporating the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV); to work with international organisations including the EU, NATO, OSCE and numerous aid agencies in the Department of Political Science and International Studies (POLSIS) and the International Development Department (IDD). The School is home to a number of research-focused units, including the Institute for Conflict Cooperation and Security (ICCS) and the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC).

Each department delivers a distinctive range of academic programmes. POLSIS is home to a significant portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered on campus; IDD has an established reputation in specialist Masters courses, many also offered through distance learning, and has recently launched two new undergraduate programmes; INLOGOV has developed a range of online and blended learning programmes, an ambitious degree apprenticeship initiative, and a full-time post graduate programme. Our MPA programmes span IDD and INLOGOV and recruit high quality students worldwide.

Research across the School reflects this diversity and breadth with significant grant income having been obtained from research councils, charities, EU funders, and UK and overseas government agencies. Recently funded projects include European populism (ESRC), attitudes toward aid (the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), democracy promotion (in partnership with the Westminster Foundation and supported by FCDO) and the political implications of infrastructural investments (Carnegie Corporation). Recently funded research in DPAP includes co-producing a social model of health through social prescribing (ZonMw), Facilitating Policy Change for Low Carbon Mobility (EPSRC), Future Flight Social Science Research (ESRC) and the youth mental health programme Mindset Revolution (ESRC/RSA).

The School's thematic research priorities include research clusters in the Democracy and Accountability; Applied Data Science, AI, and Public Policy; the Politics of Development; and Security, Conflict and Cooperation. We have particular strengths around governance and democracy (particularly around global governance and comparative national, regional and local politics and administration) and security (particularly the UK-US relationship, the European neighbourhood and former Soviet space, the Middle East and North Africa and China, Japan and the Asia-Pacific).

The School has strong support, with specialist staff dedicated to student welfare and educational enhancement. The College's wider professional services team provides specialist support in developing research grant applications, impact activities, widening participation and equality, diversity and inclusion. We have been awarded an Athena Swan Bronze award in recognition of our efforts to address gender inequalities, and provide leadership for College and university initiatives around decolonising the curriculum, addressing ethnic attainment gaps and LGBTQ+ rights.

Based on recent growth in staff and student numbers, the School is well-placed to confront the many political challenges of the next decade, and we are particularly keen to broaden our expertise in participation, representation, accountability and legitimacy. These themes have been elevated by the Covid-19 pandemic as governments across the world face multiple challenges of socio-economic repair, political stabilisation and international collaboration.

The College of Social Sciences comprises the Schools of Social Policy, Government and Education and the Birmingham Business School. It is a vibrant community with over 12,000 students as well more than 500 academic staff and nearly 300 Professional Services staff across a range of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. Our work impacts all areas of society from business and politics to education, justice, health, and social care. We have a highly diverse international staff body, teach programmes in Dubai, Singapore and online as well as in Birmingham, and we have over 100,000 alumni in more than 185 countries.

As the world faces up to multiple challenges including growing economic and social inequalities, a climate emergency and declining trust in public institutions, our aim is to develop research and education that will make a difference. Our research draws on both quantitative and qualitative approaches to address topics including the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to education for all, the challenges of integrating health and social care including in later life, the youth mental health crisis, growing attacks on democracy and accountability and the path to net zero. In line with the university's civic history and roots, we are particularly strongly engaged regionally. In turn, the quality of our work was validated in the 2021 Research Enhancement Framework (REF), with all five of our units of assessment rising significantly in the rankings, and more than half of our impact cases graded 'world leading' (4\*).

Our education portfolio is similarly broad and excellent. Our undergraduate programmes in business, accounting, finance, economics, politics, social policy, sociology, criminology, education and international development are highly competitive and have a strong track record in terms of the career destinations of our graduates. We were the first university in the UK to train students in commerce and social workers and we now educate a large number of teachers both locally and globally, including as the UK's largest provider of training to teachers of children with special educational needs. We also offer a range of specialised postgraduate programmes, degree apprenticeships and online programmes, including our highly ranked online MBA and a PhD programme that is a key part of the Midlands Graduate School.

For more details about the College of Social Sciences visit:

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/socsci](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/socsci)



## The University

The University of Birmingham was founded on the vision of Joseph Chamberlain in 1900 to provide a university for the people of Birmingham, 'a great school of universal instruction... taking all knowledge in its province'. This philosophy has defined and shaped us as an institution for our city ever since, founded on equality of opportunity for all.

We are proud to continue to find new expressions for these civic roots. The University is now a global institution, with our doors open, welcoming the best to Birmingham, and taking the best of Birmingham to the world.

Ranked in the top 100 universities globally, Birmingham is a member of the Russell Group and a founder member of the Universitas 21 global network of research universities. Ten of our alumni and staff have been recognised with Nobel Prizes, and many others are recipients of the most prestigious awards in their fields. We rank highly amongst employers seeking to recruit graduates.



Our heritage as the original 'redbrick' is combined with an ambitious agenda to continue the transformation of the University. In recent years we have significantly increased the number of leading academic colleagues, and have undertaken a £1 billion renewal of the campus estate. We have established our own non-selective secondary school and sixth form serving the diverse communities of Birmingham, and have just opened our new campus in Dubai. We take our role seriously as an anchor institution for the UK's diverse, youthful, and dynamic second city, and are one of the largest employers in the region. We value our partnerships with local organisations including through our Civic University Agreement signed with Birmingham City Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority. Through The Exchange we now have a city centre base from which to work with partners. We are

currently working with Bruntwood SciTech and NHS partners to develop the Birmingham Health Innovation Campus which will open in 2023.

Birmingham 2030 strengthens our commitment to sustainability as one of the core pillars of our activity. This includes using our research and education to make a major global contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and a headline aim to be net zero carbon for scope 1 and 2 by 2035 and overall by 2045. We are active partners in Birmingham's Tyseley Energy Park developing new technologies to contribute to Birmingham's net zero ambitions.

### **Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework**

Through our Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework we have set an aspiration to become a top 50 global institution. We recognise this is a genuinely challenging aim, which will require a vibrant, intellectually exciting, and diverse University community for research and education, as well as working closely with our partners in Birmingham and around the world.

With world-class research and outstanding global education as our core mission, we will strive to increase the volume and quality of our research to make an even greater difference to the world around us. We will be the UK's exemplary civic university, remaining firmly committed to our foundations in the highly diverse communities, people, and economy of the city of Birmingham and the West Midlands.

A link to the Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework can be found here: [www.bham.ac.uk/2030](http://www.bham.ac.uk/2030)

### **Student Experience**

We have been encouraging independent thinking and providing academic programmes that stretch and challenge for more than a century. Our stunning Edgbaston campus is a distinctive element of the experience we offer to our students.

Centred around the Green Heart, one of the largest open green spaces of any UK University, our 672 acre campus also includes The Vale student accommodation village, set around a lake in its own beautiful parkland. Our research enhances and reinforces our teaching, and we value and reward teaching quality. We have continued to provide in-person teaching through the pandemic and have blended this with enhanced digital learning. Our student

experience is enriched by a huge range of extra-curricular opportunities from sport and music to volunteering.

A University of Birmingham degree is valued by the country's top employers, founded on our commitment to provide our students with both an outstanding education and the intellectual confidence, knowledge, and skills required to thrive in their careers and make a difference in the world. We are pleased with our high rates of graduate employment, and our students are the most frequently targeted of any university by the country's top employers looking for graduate recruits.

Our student population has increased by over 4,000 since 2009-10, and we now have a total student population of over 25,000 undergraduate and 13,000 postgraduate students. We are a global community, with nearly 11,000 international students studying either at Edgbaston or overseas (at our Dubai campus, through our partnership with Jinan University, and on distance learning courses). We have 2,500 students undertaking distance learning courses.



## Exceptional Research

The University is one of the UK's most successful institutions in terms of research. In the latest Research Excellence Framework, we were placed 13<sup>th</sup> in the UK in terms of GPA, with the highest rise in position of any Russell Group university. This included a significant rise for the Birmingham Business School. Our areas of research excellence are unusually comprehensive for a UK university, with a submission to 28 of a possible 34 Units of Assessment in the REF2021. The total value of research funding won by the University has grown rapidly to over £200 million per annum for the last two years. We have a portfolio of over 2,600 live projects with an award value to the University of over £900 million.

Our academic community achieves remarkable things. We are proud that the University has contributed to the national and international response to Covid-19, drawing on our expertise

across our disciplines including virology, immunology, business, economics, law and social sciences.

As a comprehensive university, the breadth of our subject base creates many opportunities for inter-disciplinary research to solve global challenges. These are encouraged by our Institute for Global Innovation (IGI), as well as our close collaboration with industry, business, and healthcare.

Our robust industrial partnerships support enterprise and innovation across a number of sectors, working with companies as diverse as Siemens, AstraZeneca and the Royal Shakespeare Company, and drawing on our innovation assets such as the Birmingham Health Innovation Campus and the Manufacturing Technology Centre in Ansty, near Coventry.

We support academics to engage with policy makers, and through the work of University of Birmingham Enterprise, manage the University's extensive technology transfer and academic consultancy business, IP protection and spinout portfolio.

We have been integral to some of the greatest scientific discoveries of recent times, such as the discovery of the Higgs boson particle and the detection of gravitational waves. We enjoy world-class expertise in areas as diverse as mental health, Shakespeare, history, conflict and security, psychology, water science, air pollution, corpus linguistics, inter-faith understanding, and character education.

## The City of Birmingham

The City of Birmingham has undergone a major transformation in the last decade and regularly features as a top place to visit – in fact it was the only place in the UK listed in the Rough Guide's Top 10 places in the world to visit in 2015.

In a recent Sunday Times/Zoopla report, 'Best Places to live in Britain', three areas of Birmingham all made the top 50 best places to live in Britain, with the suburb of Moseley being voted the overall winner.

A city of historical interest and contemporary vision, Birmingham has a rich and diverse community that creates a vibrant, multicultural, and exciting place to live and work.

The city is home to the internationally renowned Birmingham Royal Ballet and one of the world's greatest concert venues: Symphony Hall. The City Museum and Art Gallery houses the world's finest collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, alongside a major collection of Old Masters, Modern and Contemporary pictures, while the iconic Bullring is one of the largest dedicated shopping facilities in Europe. Sports and recreation are also well served; the city offers international Test cricket, top-flight football, international championship golf and tennis, and top-class rugby. As a multicultural city, Birmingham is also renowned for the breadth of its cuisine and has more Michelin starred restaurants than any other English city outside London.

Birmingham is within an hour's drive of Stratford-upon-Avon and the Cotswolds. From Birmingham International Airport, more than 50 different airlines operate scheduled services to 100 destinations worldwide. The University has its own dedicated railway station, while 50 million passengers a year use Birmingham New Street Station, and the city will be a major hub for the UK's new high-speed rail network. London is 80 minutes away by shuttle service, with trains every 20 minutes.



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion is central to the mission and vision of the University of Birmingham. On our founding in 1900, a core commitment was to accept women and people of all religious backgrounds as equal members of the University community. Today, challenging discrimination, addressing inequalities, and promoting greater understanding continues to be one of the key challenges we face as part of a globalised society.

We are committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive learning and working environment where discrimination is not tolerated, where all members of the University can flourish and reach their full potential; where we engage with and learn from our community and where we affect positive change within the University, our city and wider society. We see this as integral to our mission and vision as a global university.

Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Scheme 2021 – 2024 sets out our objectives and actions based on the inter-locking themes of:

- **Creating an inclusive environment:** developing a University community where everyone feels welcome, included and empowered to succeed
- **Dismantling barriers:** addressing the structural barriers faced by groups within the University in order to create more equitable outcomes
- **Integrating equality, diversity and inclusion:** issues and impacts are considered and addressed across our activities

We are proud holders of the Advance HE Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan Charter, with a majority of our Schools also holding Athena awards, including the Business School. We are actively working to increase our proportion of senior female academics, the number of people from minority ethnic groups we employ and the degree awarding gap. In November 2020 the University formally adopted the IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism – this is in parallel with our existing expectations that all members of the University community should be treated with dignity and respect and that there is no place on our campus nor within our community for any form of discrimination. We are also members of Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index and Global Champions.