

Senior research fellow, democracy and politics

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the role of senior research fellow in our democracy and politics team at the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR). IPPR was launched in 1988, with the aim of generating and researching alternative, progressive policy ideas. Over more than three decades since, IPPR has worked to ensure that ideas that once seemed impossible have become reality. We are passionate and committed to working towards a fairer and more prosperous society through our pioneering research as the UK's leading progressive research charity.

From making the early case for the minimum wage and pioneering human rights law, to developing the Child Trust Fund and a windfall tax on energy companies, our research and policy work puts forward bold but actionable solutions to societal problems.

We are at an exciting time for the organisation, and a critical time for democracy, which is being reinterpreted by populist movements. In the face of these, progressives find themselves defending a status quo that many have lost confidence in. We need to do better. Now is the time to imagine new futures of democracy.

We are looking to recruit a part time senior research fellow to the democracy and politics team to take a leading role in IPPR's work on the future of democracy in a time of populism.

This is an exciting and influential role in British politics that combines ideas, policy and politics. IPPR provided the blueprint for much of the constitutional change enacted by the New Labour governments. We are now seeking to replicate that impact with the current government, albeit at a time where the stakes are higher.

We are looking for someone who is inquisitive, imaginative and full of initiative. We invite applications from all backgrounds: a degree in a democracy- or politics-related subject is not a requirement for this role. You will have a good understanding of contemporary populism, a questioning attitude, with excellent ability to reason logically and analytically, and the ability to think outside the box. You will have a track record that demonstrates the capability to design, lead and deliver high-quality research projects at pace.

If you believe you have the skills and qualities we are seeking, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

About us

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) is an independent charity working towards a fairer, greener, and more prosperous society.

We are researchers, communicators, and policy experts creating tangible progressive change, and turning bold ideas into common sense realities.

Working across the UK, IPPR, IPPR North, and IPPR Scotland, and through our pioneering participative research, we are deeply connected to the people of our nations and regions, and the issues our communities face.

We have helped shape national conversations and progressive policy change for more than 30 years. Today, our work drives social, democratic, environmental, and economic progress by securing:

- well-funded and reformed public services (health, care, housing, education) and social security that ensures everyone has access to the basics they need to flourish
- a renewed democracy which gives everyone a voice in society and passes power down to people, places, and communities, alongside a fair and compassionate immigration system which supports social integration
- a modern, green economy that delivers prosperity and justice to all people and places through actively shaping markets for social good and tackling concentrations of wealth and power.

LANDMARK RESEARCH

Our landmark reports have included the Commission on Economic Justice, a two-year inquiry to examine the challenges faced by the economy, which brought together leading figures from business, trade unions and civil society, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the City of London Corporation and the general secretary of the TUC. It's [2018 final report](#) won broad support for its bold proposals to fundamentally reform the UK economy, and is still shaping debate today.

IPPR's cross-party Environmental Justice Commission was established to respond to the climate crisis and put forward a Green New Deal plan for the UK to move to net zero. Its [influential report](#), designed to secure public support for the transition because it put fairness at its heart, was published in 2021. A further IPPR [Commission on Health and Prosperity](#) has recently concluded and was lauded by Wes Streeting, the secretary of state for health and social care.

Throughout IPPR's history, the Institute has meanwhile incubated and launched a series of practical initiatives to test and demonstrate our ideas in practice, including [Frontline](#), [Think Ahead](#), [The Difference](#) and most recently [Workwhile](#). We also incubated [Centre for Cities](#), which became independent in 2007.

Across the decades, generations of IPPR leaders, researchers and communicators have helped to transform the climate of ideas and propose practical policies to put them into effect, work which continues today. Our alumni community have gone on to work at the highest levels of the media, government, parliament, business and civil society organisations.

Job description

Job title: Senior research fellow, democracy and politics

Responsible to: Associate director, democracy and politics

Contract: Fixed term contract from mid-October 2025 to July 2026

Hours: Part time (22.5 hours per week)

Salary: £48,436 to £59,793 per year fte (£29,062 to £35,876 actual) depending on experience, plus benefits

Role:

We are looking for a creative and analytical thinker to join our democracy and politics team. As senior research fellow, you will take a leading role in IPPR's work on the future of democracy in a time of populism.

The meaning of democracy is under radical reinterpretation. The populist radical right is flying, turning the ideas and institutions of democracy as we know it upside-down. In the face of this, progressives find themselves defending a status quo that many people have lost confidence in.

We need to do better; now is the time to imagine new futures of democracy. Progressives need a convincing programme of democratic reform that is able to compete with the populist right vision of unchecked executive power, undermining the rule of law, hollowing out the administrative state, re-imagining human rights, attacking the free press, and so on.

One future is authoritarian. But another is a more demanding version of democracy. The collapse of conventional ideas makes this a time of great political openness.

This is an exciting and influential role in British politics that combines ideas, policy and politics. IPPR provided the blueprint for much of the constitutional change enacted by the New Labour governments. We are now seeking to replicate that impact with the current government, albeit at a time where the stakes are higher.

We are looking for someone who is inquisitive and imaginative. We invite applications from all backgrounds; you do not need a graduate degree in a democracy- or politics-related subject. As a senior member of the IPPR team, you will be expected to work with initiative, diligence and have strong project management skills.

Main responsibilities:

Research and synthesis

- Independently conducting high-quality research synthesis with policy and political relevance. This will include selecting and appraising high-quality research, making historical or cross-country comparisons, speaking with leading thinkers and practitioners, and concise writing.
- Designing new research proposals that speak to the political moment and conducting original research, depending on your research skills and background, in collaboration with colleagues at IPPR or academics.
- Scouting people or projects working on new developments in democratic theory and/or practice.

Policy and advocacy

- Developing original, creative and bold policy ideas for democratic and constitutional reform.
- With colleagues, helping to develop and deliver an advocacy strategy for the ideas and policies we are championing. This will involve engaging with politicians, advisors, officials and journalists.

Project management and administration

- Effectively managing multiple projects at the same time, delivering high-quality work at pace. This will include leading some projects.
- Providing project management to research staff in projects you are leading, and line management if required.
- Contributing to grow and strengthen the funding base for IPPR's work on democracy and politics. This might include fundraising for new research projects or strengthening existing funder relationships.

Profile and external relationships

- Developing and maintaining a strong and constructive set of relationships with politicians, policymakers, practitioners, journalists, academics, civil society organisations and funders.
- Contributing to IPPR's media profile, for example by writing op-eds and blog and/or taking part in TV and radio interviews.

Corporate role and internal relationships

- Active participation in IPPR's internal processes, which include forums of knowledge exchange, cross-institute research and policy discussions, and peer-led support and professional development.

Person specification

Essential knowledge, skills and experience

- Excellent critical appraisal skills, with the ability to synthesise and translate complex research into accessible form.
- Track record of thinking creatively, imaginatively or outside of the box; or regular engagement in activities that might involve lateral thinking (e.g. reading science-fiction, solving puzzles, creative arts, studying philosophy).
- Track record of work, practice or study related to a democratic ideal or principle, such as freedom, political equality, the common good, deliberation, preventing the abuse of power.
- Good understanding of the key processes and institutions of contemporary British democracy. You might have specialist expertise in one area (e.g. political parties, the media, rule of law, lobbying, parliament), or a broad, generalist knowledge set.
- Good understanding of the causes, consequences and character of contemporary populism.
- A proactive approach to work that includes a high degree of initiative and industry, with an ability to design, lead and deliver high-quality research projects.
- A questioning attitude, open-minded and inquisitive, with an excellent ability to reason logically and analytically.
- Clear and concise writer.
- Being a kind, supportive and respectful colleague who enjoys working with others and in teams.

Terms of appointment

Working for IPPR brings a range of benefits, with generous leave allowances and a commitment to work-life balance. We have offices in Manchester, London and Edinburgh and many staff work remotely for part of their week.

Salary

The salary for this role is £48,436 to £59,793 per year plus benefits on a full-time basis (£29,062 to £35,876 for 22.5 hours per week).

We generally appoint at the bottom of the pay scale. Our pay scales are designed to reward staff for the knowledge, skills and experience they develop over time, and we are committed to encouraging progression and promotion through our annual performance process. Basic rates of pay are also reviewed annually.

Contract period

This is a fixed term contract to cover maternity leave from mid-October 2025 to 3 July 2026.

Location

This post will be based in our London office, right at the heart of Westminster, with staff expected to be in the office at least 40 per cent of their working hours. As part of our commitment to flexible working we will consider a range of options for the successful applicant to fill the post. All options can be discussed at interview stage.

Annual leave

We offer a generous 25 days of annual leave plus bank holidays and five additional Christmas closure days per year (prorated for part time staff).

Pension

We recognise how important it is to help you save for your retirement and offer a defined contribution group stakeholder pension scheme with Aviva. You can choose to contribute up to 5.5% of your annual salary and we will match it.

Probation period

All appointments are subject to a six-month probationary period. This is a chance for us to support your induction and development, and make sure you have all you need to settle into IPPR and be effective in your new role. During probation you are required to give two weeks' notice.

Additional benefits

Wellbeing at work

We provide a number of ways to support your wellbeing including an occupational health service, Mental Health First Aiders and Employee Assistance Programme which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This offers in the moment support and counselling for home-life and work-related issues as well financial and legal support, specialist information and signposting services.

Family friendly

We offer generous carer and parental leave, and family friendly policies designed to support staff with their family commitments, including up to 21 weeks maternity, adoption or shared parental leave at full pay, and six weeks paid paternity leave.

Flexible working

We're open to a variety of flexible working arrangements, allowing staff to adjust their working day to suit their individual needs.

We also offer paid time off to deal with emergencies, unexpected situations and certain other unplanned special circumstances.

Learning and development

We are fully committed to the learning and development of our staff, and as part of our team you can look forward to quality training and development opportunities. We believe in helping all our staff to make the most of their talents and realise their full potential - that's why we provide everyone with the opportunity to develop and offer five days paid study leave per year.

You will have the opportunity to undertake development to meet the needs of your role and for professional and personal development through formal and informal development opportunities and on-the-job training. Everyone has regular career development conversations, with their manager and we encourage learning to be shared.

Union and staff networks

We offer the option to join a trade union and have thriving staff-led networks to make sure everyone has a voice. These provide an outlet for sharing experiences and empowering colleagues to build an inclusive culture across IPPR. Hearing thoughts and ideas from our colleagues about how and where we can improve is key to us being a great place to work and is central to our values, ethos and objectives as a progressive organisation.

Giving back

We offer three days paid special leave to participate in volunteering activities.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

IPPR is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all sections of the community, and from applicants with a range of professional and lived experiences. As an organisation engaging in critical debate about a wide range of progressive policy issues, we value the creativity and range of perspectives that a diverse team can provide.

How to apply

We hope you will consider making an application. To make an application, please send as **one** document (in PDF format):

- your updated CV (**no more than two sides**)
- a supporting statement that sets out under separate headings why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the knowledge, skills and experience criteria (**no more than two sides**)
- your answer to the following question:
 - Writing for a political audience, propose one idea that promotes political equality in the UK (**350 words max**)

We would also be grateful if you complete the [equality and diversity monitoring form](#). This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Please send your completed application to applications@ippr.org quoting **ref. SRF/AUG**

Closing date for applications: Monday 25 August 2025

Interviews will take place in our London office on Thursday 4 September.

Please contact us at recruitment@ippr.org if you need any help or adjustments to apply for this role or the application materials to be sent to you in a different format.

What happens next

We are committed to informing all applicants of the outcome of their application, but in some cases, due to the large number of applications we receive for certain jobs, this may take a while. Unfortunately we are unable to provide individual feedback to those whose applications have not been shortlisted.

We wish you every success with your application and thank you for your interest in IPPR.

Applicants guide: Right to work in the UK checks

1 Overview

UK employers are legally required to conduct Right to Work Checks. This is done to verify that their prospective employees have the appropriate and valid permission to work in the United Kingdom. This requirement is set out under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, specifically Sections 15 to 25, and is supported by Home Office guidance that is updated regularly.

You'll need to prove your right to work in the UK before you start working for us, whether permanent, temporary, part-time, or casual. How you do this depends on your nationality and what kind of permission you have to work in the UK.

This process must be applied consistently to all candidates, ensuring non-discriminatory practices irrespective of nationality, race, or ethnicity.

To verify a job applicant's right to work in the UK, the employer is required to check and retain evidence of from a list published by the Home Office. You can access the list [here](#). We will not be able to confirm employment until this documentation has been produced.

Please note, this vacancy does not meet the criteria for skilled worker sponsorship. Therefore, we are unable to accept applications from candidates that cannot provide documentary evidence of right to work in the United Kingdom. You must produce an original document – photocopies are not acceptable under the Act.

2 If you're a British or Irish citizen

If you're a British or Irish citizen, you can prove your right to work in the UK with either of the following:

- a British passport
- an Irish passport or passport card

Your passport or passport card can be current or expired.

If you do not have a passport or passport card, you can prove your right to work with one of the following:

- a UK birth or adoption certificate
- an Irish birth or adoption certificate
- a certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen

You must also give your employer an official letter or document from a previous employer or a government agency.

For example, you could use a letter from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC),

the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or the Social Security Agency in Northern Ireland.

The letter must show your name and National Insurance number.

3 If you're not a British or Irish citizen

If you're not a British or Irish citizen, you can prove your right to work with:

- a share code - you can [get a share code online](#)
- your [eligible immigration documents](#)

You can choose which option you use.

If you cannot prove your right to work

If you're not a British or Irish citizen, your employer can check if you can work with the [employer checking service](#).

If you're a Commonwealth citizen, you may be able to [get documents to show that you can work in the UK through the Windrush Scheme](#).

If you have any further queries about these provisions, please do not hesitate to ask.