

Job Description

Director of Policy, Research & External Affairs

Reports to:	Chief Executive
Hours:	35 hours per week (full-time)
Location:	Montgomery House, Belfast
Campaign Service/Cause:	Policy, Research & External Affairs
Remuneration:	£54,242 - £56,436

Overall Purpose of Post

The Director of Policy, Research and External Affairs will ensure that Cancer Focus Northern Ireland is the leading local cancer charity voice in effecting public policy and influencing politicians, senior government officials, partner organisations and other key influencers. The role will also oversee the organisation's research interests and ensure that the activity relates to the programmatic intent.

This is a crucial role which will work closely with other parts of the organisation including the Services and Fundraising & Communications teams. The postholder will work closely with the Chief Executive, Senior Leadership team and wider staff team to develop a high-performing, effective, and ambitious policy, external affairs and research strategy which will bring about improvements for those affected by and living with cancer in Northern Ireland.

Key Responsibilities

Policy & Public Affairs

- To lead and implement a high impact policy and public affairs strategy in Northern Ireland consistent with the organisation's vision and strategy.
- To build and manage relationships with key influencers and thought leaders in Northern Ireland, including MLAs, policy makers, Department of Health and other government officials, as well as other relevant agencies, healthcare and charitable leaders and organisations.
- To lead and manage the organisation's work as Secretariat of the All-Party Group for Cancer ensuring that there is a relevant, intentional, and ambitious programme to influence legislative change and policy development.
- To lead and represent the organisation on key forums such as Northern Ireland Cancer Programme Board, Northern Ireland Cancer Registry Steering Group, European Cancer League, Northern Ireland Cancer Charities Coalition and other networks.
- To lead on establishing the organisation's knowledge base, developing public positions on all relevant cancer policy and to provide and disseminate information, guidance and support to staff across the organisation.
- To maintain a comprehensive understanding of all policy matters relating to cancer in Northern Ireland, particularly around Cancer Focus NI's key strategic objectives in order to enable evidence-based policy positions that are relevant to emerging trends, news, developments in the cancer eco-system and the political climate.
- To conduct comprehensive horizon scanning, including beyond Northern Ireland in other parts of the UK, Europe and internationally to ensure that CEO, senior leadership and wider staff teams are briefed and up to date on relevant policy information and developments in the external environment, especially where there is relevance to organisational strategic priorities.
- To work closely with Cancer Focus NI's various Service teams and Volunteer Engagement Co-ordinator to ensure that people affected by cancer have the opportunity to actively participate in the organisation's policy, public, research and external affairs strategy. To work with senior colleagues to embed a culture of service user involvement from across the organisation into this work to be able to learn from their experiences as well as enhancing equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- To produce high-quality, evidence-based policy reports, briefings, and position papers to ensure that the Chief Executive and senior leadership team present relevantly and accurately in internal documents and resources, the media and external environment.

External Affairs & Engagement

- To monitor the external environment, identify and capitalise on opportunities for policy, external affairs and media output which furthers the strategic aims and objectives of Cancer Focus NI.
- To lead on campaigning and advocacy plans that align with Cancer Focus NI's key strategic priorities, including project managing policy and external events.
- To work collaboratively with the senior leadership and communications teams in developing targeted campaigns to enable us to mobilise and grow our existing support and volunteer base.
- To ensure that there is a regular pipeline of policy-centred media stories and proactively secure media coverage related to the organisation's programme of policy and public affairs work which deliver change for people affected by cancer in Northern Ireland.
- To gather experiences and insights from those using Cancer Focus NI's services to ensure that these views and opinions inform and shape the organisation's external affairs and engagement strategies.
- To work closely with the Fundraising team to maximise opportunities for collaboration, specifically seeking links with potential corporate and major donors.
- To work closely with the Communications team to ensure that the organisation's agreed policy positions are effectively communicated in the public domain by supporting the drafting of compelling press releases, organisational statements, and other content for use on Cancer Focus NI's website, social media and other media channels.
- To be a voice and ambassador for the charity by taking part in TV, radio and press interviews ensuring consistent and accurate messaging.

Research

- To lead on identifying opportunities for Cancer Focus NI to invest in appropriate research that supports the achievement of its mission, and which are aligned with core strategic organisational objectives.
- To lead on and support research into the personal and social outcomes of local people affected by and living with cancer in Northern Ireland.
- To collate and analyse statistics and data from a range of sources, including the Department of Health, Public Health Agency, Academia, Northern Ireland Cancer Registry, to analyse trends, concerns and issues on all matters affecting cancer patients in Northern Ireland and in turn make recommendations and develop organisational response.
- To lead on research that seeks to address and tackle health inequalities in Northern Ireland, integrating with broader advocacy and policy work.
- To evaluate all policy, external affairs and research activities to understand and communicate outcomes, impact and learning.

External Relationships

- To be an effective ambassador representing and promoting Cancer Focus NI and its objectives, as well as living out the organisational values.
- To effectively build and develop key stakeholder relationships to promote and develop Cancer Focus NI at every opportunity.
- To attend external meetings where appropriate and build a credible personal and organisational reputation as a 'go-to' for cancer-related matters.
- In conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team, to manage reputational risk in relation to policy, external affairs and research.

General

- To work as part of a multidisciplinary team comprising Cancer Focus NI staff and participating in team meetings, including working on internal cross-departmental groups as and when required.
- To comply with all Cancer Focus NI policies and procedures.
- To carry out any other duties as may be reasonably required by Cancer Focus NI.

This Job Description is not exhaustive. It merely acts as a guide and may be amended to meet the changing requirements of the charity at any time after discussion with the post holder.

Person Specification

Director of Policy, Research & External Affairs

The below specification shows the essential skills, abilities, knowledge and/or qualifications required to be able to carry out the duties of this post. Therefore, please address in a covering letter, each criterion listed in the specification, drawing upon all of your experience, whether at work or on a voluntary basis.

Essential Criteria

Experience

- Minimum of 5 years' experience of working in a policy / public affairs environment.
- Able to demonstrate experience of leading on impactful policy and public affairs strategies in Northern Ireland.
- Able to demonstrate successful external affairs work and involvement in senior organisational communications delivery.
- Able to demonstrate experience of preparing briefings, position papers and presentations for various audiences.

Qualifications

- Educated to degree level or suitable significant relevant professional experience.
- Proven leader in strategic policy development and external affairs work.

Knowledge / Skills

- Strong understanding and knowledge of evidence-based policy development.
- Strong understanding and experience of the NI Assembly and local governance structures.
- Detailed knowledge of voluntary and community sector environment in Northern Ireland.
- Excellent strategic thinker with ability to identify and analyse data/trends.
- Excellent verbal, written and presentational skills.
- Excellent networking, influencing and relationship building skills.
- Ability to manage a large workload with competing priorities.
- Ability to show initiative.
- Experience of facilitating groups.
- To be IT proficient, including in the use of spreadsheets and databases.

Personal Qualities

- Passion for policy, influencing and external affairs for better patient outcomes.
- Enthusiasm, drive, and commitment to achieving change.
- Confidence, authority and ability to build effective relationships with senior key influencers & decision makers.

- High level of emotional intelligence.

Other

- Applicants will hold a full, current driving license and have access to the use of a car or some other appropriate form of transport to carry out the duties of the post.
- This post may require occasional evening or weekend work and will require an element of flexible working.

Desirable Criteria

Experience

- Significant experience of working within the cancer sector demonstrating a deep knowledge and understanding of the needs of cancer patients and their families.
- Experience of working within the voluntary sector.
- Experience of working with volunteers, patients, and service users and involving them in policy work.
- Experience of facilitating groups / workshops.
- Experience / involvement in health-related research.

Knowledge / Skills

- Strong understanding and knowledge of evidence-based policy (specifically within cancer sector).
- In depth knowledge of health and social care structures and environment in Northern Ireland.

Additional Information

Terms and Conditions of Employment

- Successful applicants must provide proof of their right to work in the UK. (This will be evidenced in the first instance by being in possession of a British or Irish passport or a valid UK Work Permit)
- Satisfactory reference checks
- A satisfactory Basic Access NI check
- 12 months probationary period
- Evidence of relevant academic and professional qualifications
- Evidence of appropriate vehicle documentation (i.e. driving licence and insurance cover) must be provided where the role necessitates travel on company business in own vehicle

Benefits

- Flexible working policy
- 25 days Annual Leave, plus 12 statutory days (pro rata for those working less than 35 hrs per week)
- 2 additional days of annual leave after 5 years' service and a further 3 days after 10 years' service
- Enhanced Maternity / Adoption Pay
- Enhanced Occupational Sick Pay Scheme
- Contributory Pension Scheme
- Cycle to Work Scheme
- Mileage Allowance at the prevailing HMRC rate
- Life Assurance
- Healthcare Plan

Disability

Cancer Focus NI is an Equal Opportunities Employer and all applications are dealt with in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act. A person is disabled if they have, or have had, "a physical or mental impairment which has, or has had, a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities".

If you consider yourself to have a disability relevant to the position for which you are applying, please contact us so that we can process your application fairly, make any specific arrangements for your interview, and make any necessary reasonable adjustments or adaptations, or provide any aids to assist you in completing the duties of the post if appointed.

Equal Opportunities

Cancer Focus NI is an Equal Opportunities Employer and all applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

Application Process

The closing date/time for submission of CV and cover letter is 5.00pm, 20th June 2025.

Interview dates: 26th / 27th June 2025

If you would like to apply for this role, please submit an up-to-date copy of your CV and cover letter before this date/time to: hradmin@cancerfocusni.org or, mailed to:

Human Resources, Cancer Focus NI, 40/44 Eglantine Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6DX

We cannot accept Applications received after the closing date/time.

Guidance Notes on Applying for our role

Please ensure your CV is up-to-date and accurate. Cancer Focus NI will not make assumptions from the title of your post(s) or the nature of any employing organisation(s) as to your skills and experience gained.

- If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet any eligibility criteria, your application may be rejected.
- ONLY the details provided by you in your CV and cover letter will be used for determining your eligibility for the post/shortlisting purposes.

Contact Details

If you have any enquiries regarding the recruitment process, please contact Gwyneth Richards (hradmin@cancerfocusni.org) or phone 028 9066 3281.