

JOB DESCRIPTION			
Job title	Public Services Research Lead	Department	Ada Lovelace Institute
Job holder		Reports to	Associate Director, Social and Economic Policy
Job type	Full time, fixed term for 2 years. Will consider part time (0.8FTE) and secondment arrangements	Date created	September 2025
Job aim	To develop and deliver strategy and lead research to shape the use of data and AI in the public sector through policy and practice recommendations, communications and networks. This is a core part of Ada’s strategy to underpin its mission to ensure data and AI work for people and society.		
Key responsibilities: Including but not limited to			
1. Development and delivery of public services strategy (20%)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Work with the Associate Director (social and economic policy) to develop public services strategy, aligned with our new organisation strategy.▪ Undertake rapid scoping to consider which issues to engage with, where Ada has a unique contribution to give, and the appropriate methods.▪ Lead the successful delivery of public services strategy which balances responsive research, deeper primary/secondary research projects, cross-Ada and cross-Nuffield collaborative projects, convening, and synthesis.▪ Map, establish and build key relationships with decision-makers and thinkers in order to position Ada, and specifically the Social and Economic Policy research domain, as a key influencer on questions of data and AI use in public services.▪ Develop partnership with key actors, like regulators, what works centres, sector bodies, public services and parts of the public sector (like the Digital Centre of Government).▪ Scope and consider international or comparative research and where UK research may be of value to wider audiences.		
2. Research, writing and convening projects (60%)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Scope, develop, lead and contribute to research, writing and convening projects related to the use of data/AI in the public sector in the UK and elsewhere.▪ Conduct responsive research, analysis and translation on key public service questions.▪ Exercise thought leadership and speak publicly to represent Ada in private and public forums, deputising for Associate Directors where appropriate. Identify potential project opportunities and contribute to funding bids.		
3. Development of policy and practice recommendations (10%)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lead projects which support policy, advocacy and communications activities across S.		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how to develop practical recommendations on top of Ada's research to support public services making decisions about the use of data/AI.
4. Resource and people management (10%)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line management responsibility for up to three direct reports or consultants. To play a leading role in supportive a positive culture and effective working practices in SES and across Ada, championing existing processes and suggesting how Ada could continue to evolve. To have excellent working relationships with other research domains, communications and public participation and research practice. To manage own work and time effectively.

Person specification	Essential (E) or Desirable (D)
Skills and Experience	
Experience of undertaking and working with primary and secondary research	E
Experience working on issues of data, technology and AI policy and/or its impact on society.	E
Excellent editorial, synthesis and analysis skills.	E
Experience working within a public sector or public service, or experience undertaking research or seeking to influence public sector practice or policy (from industry, charitable or civil society organisations, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), think tanks or learned societies).	E
Clear and persuasive communications, written and spoken.	E
Experience contributing to the design and planning of policy/influencing strategy.	E
Experience of working on public sector reform or delivery relating to data/AI.	HD
Experience of writing on complex topics for different audiences, including general ones.	HD
Experience doing fieldwork, research or data collection at the intersection of technology and society.	D
Leadership and People Management	
Experience of working with a diverse range of stakeholders.	E
Ability to produce and execute an ambitious but achievable agenda with high impact at pace.	E
Ability to manage people, relationships and networks efficiently and with care.	E
Experience of line management.	E
Experience in setting up and maintaining collaborations involving multiple stakeholders.	D
Experience with project or advocacy management, planning and coordination.	D
Personal Qualities	
A willingness to continually learn and immerse oneself in the issues raised by using data and AI.	E
A keen and demonstrable interest in issues of social, public and tech issues; public sector reform; AI and data ethics; responsible research and innovation; and wider tech policy issues.	E
A commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, and to addressing structural inequalities and injustice	E

Approaches research and project management in an organised and structured way	
Strategic and tactical thinking, with a good political antenna, able to spot opportunities, gaps and positioning, weighing short-term and long-term ambitions for the organisation.	E
Flexible and creative, able to think outside the box.	E
Ability to speak with a non-partisan voice, reflecting Ada's commitment to independence, diversity, pluralistic and evidence-based positions.	E
Comfortable working at pace and with a large degree of independence.	E
Embracing a collaborative approach to research, thinking and writing.	E
A caring, mentoring and coaching approach to people management	E

A day in the life of a senior role at Ada

Most of the team are online by 9.30, but some prefer to start and finish early or late. We do not believe in strict adherence to working hours and prioritise productivity over clock-watching. We generally start the day by checking in over chat and letting our colleagues know what the day ahead holds.

Every day will be different, and you will probably spend about a third of your day in meetings or on calls – doing outreach and sharing information with stakeholders such as DSIT, peer organisations, or academics and researchers; coordinating external consultants, commissioned researchers or Working Groups; interviewing data scientists or policy people for research, or speaking to the occasional journalist.

You'll have a weekly check-in with your line manager and any direct reports, and other members of Ada's Senior Leadership Team. You might be asked to join or lead a call comprising policy and comms colleagues to develop strategy on a new Government policy, feedback on designs for the new website, or discuss organisational policy. Once a fortnight you'll lead our public service strategy check-in or longer strategy session, to monitor and triage key developments arising, and check strategy delivery in on track. That might trigger discussions with researchers leading domain work, feedback to the full team at the weekly all-hands meetings, or a new project. You'll have regular interactions with our communications team, keeping them abreast of work underway, collaborating on influencing strategy for a forthcoming output, or working together on an output.

The rest of your day you'll spend researching, reading and writing. It might be that you're running fieldwork in a local public service, writing commentary on a health data sharing proposal, finalising an output on the public sector's use of transcription tools, running workshops to develop analysis and policy lines, or drafting a briefing to share with parliamentarians. You'll spend some time reading recent news articles, dipping into social media and catching up on important policy literature and commentary in our field.

You might wrap up the day by doing some thinking – about new projects Ada should conceive, new funding opportunities, or new partnerships we might pursue. Occasionally there might be evening events to attend or national or international travel.

Each week we have short social check-ins and check-outs, and 4 paid reading weeks a year where we can get off-screen and do some deeper reflection, reading and writing.