

Senior Research Officer

Information Pack

Closing date – 10 February 2026

Duration: Permanent

Salary: £47,698 – £56,471 per annum

Welcome

This is a great time to join us at Estyn. We're actively supporting schools and other providers through exciting reforms in Welsh education. Our work makes a real difference to learners across Wales and at Estyn, they're at the heart of everything we do.

We're proud to play a vital role in improving education and training. Our people are passionate about what they do, and we work collaboratively to deliver high-quality services that promote accountability, support improvement, and help shape the future of learning in Wales.

We're looking for an experienced researcher who enjoys shaping how evidence is used to inform understanding, improvement and decision-making across Estyn. You'll bring strong research expertise, intellectual curiosity and a collaborative approach, helping colleagues engage confidently with evidence and apply research principles in practice. This role suits someone who values ethical, transparent analysis, enjoys working across disciplines, and is motivated by strengthening research capability at an organisational level.

If you're motivated by public service and keen to strengthen how research informs inspection, thematic work and strategic decision-making, we'd be pleased to hear from you.

By joining us, you'll become part of a forward-thinking and evolving organisation, one that's committed to learning, improvement, and the development of its people. You'll also gain access to opportunities across the wider Civil Service, giving you room to grow and shape your career.

This pack includes more information about what it's like to work with us, details about the role, and guidance on how to apply.



Owen Evans, HMCI

Why work for Estyn?

We are the education and training inspectorate for Wales. Our aim is to improve the quality of education and training for learners in Wales. One of our key roles is to inspect education and training in Wales to give assurance to the public and government regarding educational standards.

We help education providers, such as schools and colleges, to improve quality and outcomes. We also advise the Welsh Government about educational policy and prepare reports on a wide range of educational issues and themes. Further information on our work can be found [here](#).

Our work makes a real difference to learners in Wales, and we know that it's our dedicated team who help make that happen.

We believe in supporting and valuing every member of our team. From day one, you'll be welcomed into a friendly, professional environment where your ideas and contributions matter. You'll receive a thorough induction to help you understand how your role fits into our shared mission. You'll be part of a collaborative network of colleagues, both within your team and across the wider organisation.

We're committed to helping you grow. You'll have access to a wide range of learning and development opportunities to build your skills and support your career journey, whether that's through individual training or team development.

If you care about making a difference and want to work somewhere that supports your development and values your well-being, Estyn is a great place to work.

Diversity and inclusion

We're committed to creating a workplace where everyone feels welcome, supported, and able to thrive. At Estyn, we value different perspectives and lived experiences which help us grow stronger as an organisation and make better, more informed decisions for the learners and communities we serve.

We know that a diverse team brings fresh ideas, richer conversations, and stronger outcomes. That's why we encourage applications from people of all backgrounds, cultures, and experiences.

A key strategic priority is to increase the diversity of our workforce. Our commitment to recruiting and attracting diverse talent extends to actively encouraging applications from underrepresented groups including ethnic minority, and disabled people. We adopt inclusive recruitment practices including blind shortlisting of candidates and are proud to be a disability confident employer, offering support with adjustments through our process to make sure you can be at your best.

By working together and celebrating what makes each of us unique, we can continue to make a meaningful difference to education in Wales.



Flexible and hybrid working

At Estyn, we believe flexibility helps our people do their best work while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. That's why we support a hybrid working approach for our Central Services team.

Typically, this means working from home, with one set day in the Cardiff office as a team day. It's a great opportunity to collaborate, catch up in person, and stay connected. There is also the flexibility to work more in the office should that be your preference.

We also hold Central Services get-togethers and all-staff conferences throughout the year to bring everyone together, share updates, and strengthen our sense of community.

We operate a flexitime system too, giving you even more freedom to shape your working day in a way that suits you and meets business needs.

It's all about trust, balance, and supporting each other to work well, wherever we are.

Who we're looking for

You will be responsible for leading the research function within Estyn to develop the structures and systems needed to support the organisation to become more research informed and research literate and support the integration of research principles throughout Estyn's work, ensuring that evidence is critically appraised, clearly interpreted, and applied to strategic priorities and policy/ practice.

Key tasks include:

- Designing approach for increased and systematic interrogation of our existing evidence to support Estyn's work
- Advising on our future analysis of qualitative inspection outcomes
- Developing protocols for our use of analysis tools, including qualitative data analysis software
- Developing a robust method for analysing qualitative comments in surveys
- Lead on advising on our future staffing requirements for Estyn's research services
- Ensuring that all analysis is ethically robust, transparent, and communicated with clarity about strengths, limitations, and implications.
- Leading on developing ensuing guidance and professional learning for inspectors
- Delivering the thematic survey briefing and training process for inspectors, including gathering relevant background information and providing advice on project design, research methods and instruments
- Ensuring a research-informed approach to survey design, analysis, and quality assurance to support Estyn's thematic survey work and wider evidence base, including the Annual Report and inspection
- Timely dissemination of, and engagement with research findings to Estyn's internal audience, including producing a regular Research Update
- Leading on developing and maintaining strategic links with the wider research community and promoting the use of external evidence
- Working across the team to provide integrated analytical advice to Estyn colleagues
- Contributing to the development and maintenance of a systematic approach to storing intelligence and relevant knowledge, including the development of tools and systems to share research-informed knowledge

Person specification

Job specific criteria

It's essential that you have:

- A minimum of 2:2 in an undergraduate degree or a postgraduate degree
- **AND** either, a relevant social science subject at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Which contains substantial social research methods training. (We would expect social research methods to represent around a third of modules taken) **OR** at least 4 years' social research practice experience. (This would be experience designing, managing and conducting research in a research agency, market research agency or specialised research team. For this route you must make explicit the breadth and depth of your research experience and skills).
- Relevant research experience, ideally including both qualitative and quantitative research with the ability to design, commission, analyse, interpret and critically appraise social research evidence
- A sound understanding and knowledge of statistics.
- The ability to interpret findings and data appropriately to support evidence-based decision making.
- The ability to work beyond area(s) of professional responsibility and build wider links with the work of other teams across the organisation.
- The ability to build strong collaborative professional relationships with a diverse range of people and establish effective and influential links across the organisation
- Experience of effectively managing a varied and demanding workload and complex projects
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills and effective IT skills including data literacy, research software, and digital tools to support analysis
- A demonstrated commitment to ethical research practice, including integrity, transparency and fairness in the use and presentation of evidence.

It is desirable that you have:

- Experience of using software tools to support research
- Ability to operate through the medium of Welsh.

Key behaviours

- Seeing the big picture
- Changing and improving
- Making effective decisions
- Communicating and influencing
- Managing a quality service

You can find more information and examples of these behaviours in [Success Profiles - Civil Service Behaviours](#) at Grade SEO.

Technical skills

- Knowledge of research methods, techniques & application
- Managing & commissioning social research

The [Government Social Research \(GSR\) Competency Framework](#) defines the standards of professional expertise (technical skills and using and promoting social research) required for Senior Research Officers.

Benefits of joining Estyn

In addition to a good work/life balance, job satisfaction, a supporting culture, ongoing learning and development opportunities and professional development, you can also expect other benefits, including the following:

- Competitive salary and incremental points meaning that you will normally reach the maximum of the pay scale within two/three years of joining us.
- Generous holiday entitlement – 41 days away from work each year (made up of 31 days of annual leave, plus 10 public/privilege holidays (pro-rated for those who work part-time)).
- Flexible working - We operate a flexi-time system, giving you the freedom to shape your working day in a way that suits you and meets business needs.
- Excellent pension - When you join Estyn, you'll automatically become part of the Civil Service Pension scheme, one of the most valuable pension schemes in the UK. We invest in your future by contributing **28.97%** of your salary which equates to **£13,818** helping you build a strong and secure pension for later in life.
- Support for your well-being – We provide an hour of well-being time per week (pro-rated) for staff. We also provide an employee assistance programme, free annual health checks, seasonal flu jabs, a free eye care scheme and access to Health Insurance Plans through Civil Service Healthcare.
- Support for your family life – generous family friendly policies including maternity, paternity, adoption leave.
- Tax-free savings – Access to a cycle to work scheme.
- Special offers and discounts – Access to a range of discounts and exclusive offers through the Civil Service Social Club – Sports and Leisure, the Civil Service Motoring Association, the Civil Service Insurance Society and the Charity for Civil Servants.

Apply now!

Enquiries: If you have any questions about the role, please contact **Rhidian Dafydd** on rhidian.dafydd@estyn.gov.uk

Apply online: To apply for the role please visit - [JobBoard \(estynpeoplehr.cymru\)](https://estynpeoplehr.cymru).

Closing date: 10:00am on 10 February 2026

Alternative arrangements or accessible documents: If you'd like to apply or access this document in an alternative format, please contact us to discuss your requirements.

Selection process and key dates

You are able to apply in Welsh or English. An application submitted in Welsh will not be treated less favourably than an application submitted in English. Your application may be translated into Welsh or English (depending on the majority language of the panel).

The selection process includes:

A sift of applications: The panel will consider all complete applications. The information you give us in your application is important in deciding whether we will invite you to the next selection stage. Candidates will be assessed at sift on all essential criteria as per the person specification. Desirable criteria will be assessed at sift where there is a strong field of candidates as a second stage after essential criteria have been considered.

Assessment and Interview: Candidates who are successful at the sifting stage will be invited to assessment and interview at our office in Cardiff on 18-20 February. Candidates will be assessed using the Government Social Research assessment approach. These include:

- A knowledge test
- An oral briefing exercise which will assess the [technical skills](#) and communicating and influencing within the person specification
- A general interview following the oral briefing which will cover [key behaviours](#) within the person specification.

As we are looking to recruit for a Senior Research Officer and Research Officer, you will have the opportunity to apply for either or both roles. If you apply for both roles, you will be assessed at both levels throughout the interview.

Future vacancies and reserve lists: If you are appointable, but there isn't a suitable post immediately available, we may add you to a reserve list. The reserve list is valid for up to twelve months from the date we confirm the outcome of your application. The outcome email will confirm if you are on a reserve list. If a suitable vacancy occurs during that period, we may recommend you for appointment. We appoint from the reserve list in merit order.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can be helpful in various stages of applying for a job. You could use AI as a tool to research Estyn and the job you're applying for. You could also use it to organise your thoughts, refine your writing or to help you prepare for an interview. We are keen to get to know you as a person so you must ensure AI aided content maintains your authenticity.

You must not use AI tools to:

- Exaggerate qualifications
- Misrepresent your experiences
- Copy and paste generic responses without editing them to ensure they are appropriate for you and the role you are applying for.

How we use AI

At Estyn, we may use AI to generate ideas for Job Adverts, Job Descriptions, assessments, and interview questions, but we will never use AI tools to make selection or hiring decisions.

Recruitment principles

Our recruitment processes are based on the principle of selection for appointment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. We follow the [Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles](#).

Our recruitment processes also align with the [civil service code](#), which forms part of the terms and conditions of every civil servant.

The Civil Service Code outlines the core values of the Civil Service:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Impartiality
- Objectivity

If you feel we have not treated your application under the Principles or the Civil Service Code and you want to make a complaint, in the first instance please contact [Estyn's recruitment team](#).

If you're not satisfied with the response you receive from us, you may be able to ask the [Civil Service Commission](#) to consider your complaint further.