ICON Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods

Starfish

ICON – INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON NEIGHBOURHOODS

DIRECTOR



November 2026

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming our Director at the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods (ICON). This is a pivotal appointment as ICON moves from its initial programme of research and recommendations towards a sustained, independent role in shaping policy, investment and practice for England's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Established with support from Local Trust, ICON brings together evidence, lived experience and cross-party expertise. Its purpose is to improve the prospects of neighbourhoods facing concentrated disadvantage, weak social infrastructure and historic underinvestment, and to strengthen the influence residents have over decisions affecting their lives.

I have thoroughly enjoyed chairing ICON since it was established. We have built a substantial evidence base and a platform for national debate. The next phase is about translating that work into lasting change: setting a clear advocacy strategy, developing practical policy proposals, building alliances and maintaining meaningful relationships with neighbourhoods.

ICON is developing its long-term strategy and future organisational arrangements as Local Trust approaches closure. An independent hosting or incubator arrangement is being explored, alongside the governance, leadership, funding and partnerships required for the next phase. The successful candidate will help shape and deliver this transition, working closely with me, the Advisory Board and relevant partners.

Our approach must connect national influence with the distinctive experiences of different places. We want to amplify the voices of residents without treating communities as a single, homogeneous group, and to combine democratic accountability with meaningful participation and resident control.

We are looking for a strategic and politically astute leader who can work across parties and institutions, lead a small high-performing team, build durable partnerships and turn evidence into persuasive, deliverable proposals. You will help ICON develop its programme and influence while safeguarding its independence and credibility.

You will bring experience of public policy and advocacy, sound judgement in complex political environments, strong communication skills and the ability to manage organisational change. Equally important is a commitment to equity and to places that have been overlooked by mainstream policy and investment.

This is an opportunity to help establish ICON's next chapter and secure a stronger national focus on neighbourhood renewal and community power. We would welcome your application.

Baroness Hilary Armstrong of Hill Top

Chair, Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods

About us

Launched in September 2024, the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods (ICON) makes the case for sustained action to improve England's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It combines research, lived experience and policy expertise to develop practical proposals for neighbourhood renewal.

ICON examines how neighbourhood conditions shape health, opportunity and quality of life, with particular attention to places where deprivation is compounded by weak social infrastructure and long-term underinvestment. Its work draws on domestic and international evidence, residents' experience and learning from community-led approaches.

Chaired by Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top, the Commission draws on cross-party political experience and expertise in policy, research and practice. Its independent secretariat has worked with commissioners, an academic panel, a lived experience panel and community sector partners.

Building on its published research and policy proposals, ICON is developing a sustained role in political and policy advocacy: making the case for long-term investment, stronger neighbourhood institutions, resident influence and action to reduce inequalities between places. This includes building relationships across government, Parliament, public services, philanthropy and civil society.

ICON was established with support from Local Trust and continues with support from This Day Foundation. Its future hosting, governance and operating arrangements are being developed as part of the transition beyond Local Trust.

Explore our reports and publications;

No Short Cuts: Towards a National Strategy for Neighbourhood Recovery

Neighbourhood Policy Green Paper



Job description

Salary: c.£100,000 per annum on a full-time permanent basis.

Location: Home-based

Job title: Director

Reports to: Chair of the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods

Role purpose: To lead ICON and help shape and deliver its next phase as an influential, sustainable and politically independent voice for disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The postholder will work with the Chair and other stakeholders to translate evidence and community experience into policy advocacy, build partnerships and oversee organisational transition and delivery.

Main responsibilities:

- Lead the development and implementation of ICON's policy and political advocacy programme, with clear objectives, audiences, messages and routes to influence.
- Provide strategic advice and high-quality support to the Chair, translating agreed priorities into a focused programme of work.
- Develop credible policy proposals and briefings grounded in evidence, neighbourhood experience and an understanding of what is deliverable.
- Build and maintain constructive, cross-party relationships with ministers, parliamentarians, officials, local government, public services and sector leaders while protecting ICON's independence.
- Ensure sustained, inclusive engagement with residents and neighbourhood organisations, with feedback informing ICON's priorities and public positions.
- Lead the transition to ICON's next organisational phase, contributing to hosting, governance, funding and operational arrangements as they are agreed.
- Lead, support and manage the secretariat team, budgets, external advisers and delivery partners; establish proportionate plans, reporting and risk management.
- Develop strategic partnerships and funding relationships to support ICON's long-term sustainability and influence.
- Oversee communications, publications, media engagement, events and convening activity that advance ICON's objectives.
- Maintain the quality, integrity and accessibility of ICON's evidence and ensure the Chair receives timely analysis and advice.
- Work within relevant charity-law and non-party-political boundaries, ensuring advocacy serves ICON's public-benefit purposes.
- Monitor progress and impact, adapting the programme as policy opportunities and neighbourhood needs evolve.



Person specification

Knowledge and experience

- Substantial experience of shaping public policy, advocacy or political engagement, ideally in neighbourhood renewal, regeneration, local government, health inequalities or community power.
- A track record of influencing senior decision-makers and building relationships across political, governmental and civil society settings.
- Experience leading and developing a small team, managing programmes, budgets and competing priorities.
- Experience of organisational development, transition, partnership governance or establishing new programmes and structures.
- Experience commissioning, interpreting and communicating research and evidence to influence policy and practice.
- Experience of communications, public affairs and media engagement, with an understanding of the independence required of a cross-party commission.

Skills and abilities

- Political judgement and the ability to work credibly across parties without compromising independence.
- Excellent strategic writing, analysis and the ability to turn complex evidence into clear policy propositions.
- Strong public communication, persuasion and presentation skills.
- Ability to build trusted partnerships, negotiate constructively and challenge where necessary.
- Understanding of inequalities between neighbourhoods and the importance of resident voice, participation and democratic accountability.
- Ability to lead through uncertainty, prioritise delivery and build effective systems for a small organisation.
- Commitment to inclusion, equity and ethical, evidence-led advocacy.



How to apply

We hope you will consider making an application. To make an application, please visit https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/icon-director/ and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than three sides).
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides) explaining your motivation and how your experience meets the person specification, focussing on policy influence, leadership and organisational transition.
- A link to a publication or policy paper that shows your track record on an issue relevant to this role.

We would also be grateful if you would complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Closing date:	6th December 2026
Preliminary interviews:	w/c 14th December 2026
Final Panel interviews:	w/c 4th January and w/c 11th January 2027

