

POLICY & RESEARCH OFFICER

Contract: Permanent

Hours: Full-time

Salary: £24-28k, plus benefits

Location: Vauxhall, London, with UK and some overnight travel

Reports to: Director of Policy & Communications

How to apply: see final section

Deadline for applications is 11am on Wednesday 20 October 2021.

Interviews will take place on Tuesday 2 November via Zoom.

Introduction to the Sheila McKechnie Foundation

We are a small organisation with a growing profile and reputation as thinkers, innovators and capacity-builders in social change. We work to provoke new thinking, gather evidence, convene practitioners, sharpen strategy, and encourage greater collaboration. These are all ways we are working to orient civil society more strongly towards reform.

Our vision is a more confident and powerful civil society where people work together to drive social change. We work right across civil society, from unpaid volunteer campaigners to big national and global organisations. We bring a wide view of social change that recognises its complexity, and that is combined with a deep commitment to social justice.

Where we are in our journey

SMK is in an exciting place. A few years ago, we agreed an ambition to become known as experts in social change. Our *Social Power* report, describes how social change is happening today. The tools in the report are being used widely – by change-makers, funders and policy-makers – to challenge their thinking and develop new approaches. We want to help them go further.

We are unrelentingly curious, tracking and analysing the way that social change is shifting and sharing that knowledge so that it can be used across civil society. We look to people's experiences as well as academic research, to contemporary commentators and historical examples. All the while, we stand up for campaigners, working to ensure they are able to shape their world without unreasonable constraint.

About the role

Working closely with the wider team, this role will help to grow our knowledge and learning. This means: being constantly curious about social change to bring new ideas and evidence into the organisation; undertaking research and exploration aimed at deepening understanding in particular areas; organising discussions or events that help others to explore how change is happening; and spotting new gaps, ideas and opportunities that SMK should step into.

You will support the Director of Policy & Communications and the Chief Executive in our public affairs work – helping to build relationships with decision-makers, feed into wider partnerships with other civil society groups, and present our material in an accessible and persuasive manner.

We are also committed to bringing change-makers together and sharing our learning as widely as possible. You will support our events programme by working with our Head of Marketing & Communications to identify speakers, design agendas, and organise events that help SMK to do just that.

About you

You are someone with a passion for social change and the intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial zeal to help deepen our shared understanding.

You will be familiar with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and the way it tends to think about campaigning and social change.

You are able to carry out desk research, interviews and other activity that will deepen our knowledge and learning, and have an aptitude for converting that knowledge into accessible content (whether that's an article, report or social media content). You are organised and able to manage your workload, with support from your manager. You are able to deliver small projects (such as putting on an event) in collaboration with colleagues.

You will thrive in a small, busy and ambitious team and have the flexibility to handle a broad and changeable workload. You'll be able to jump right in, working closely with the team to deliver at an exciting phase of our strategic development and organisational growth.

The pandemic

We have shifted to a mix of office and homeworking for the time being, but our work hasn't slowed down. Civil society organisations are already seeing that their role as change-makers is becoming even more critical.

Our offices are in London, and this post would normally be based there. We welcome applications from other parts of the country but be aware that, under normal circumstances, applicants should expect to work from our offices three to five days a week, with related travel and accommodation at their own expense (expenses incurred for SMK business outside London are covered).

Job description

As Policy & Research Officer, in collaboration with colleagues, you will:

Investigate social change

- Support SMK's investigation and analysis of social change and civil society's role in it
- Design and deliver research projects that investigate aspects of social change, building on SMK's existing body of work
- Produce and present the results of investigation and research in a clear and accessible format
- Contribute to SMK's horizon-scanning by monitoring external sources of information including media, Parliament and Government, think tanks and others for issues and developments of relevance
- Encourage change-makers and civil society leaders to actively participate in our investigations, aiming to drive a continuing conversation.

Communicate & share insights

- Work with the Director of Policy & Communications to generate findings and insights to share with our audiences
- Produce content (reports, articles, social media content) that is engaging and accessible
- Establish and maintain good working relationships with stakeholders
- Represent SMK at meetings or in networks, updating relevant colleagues who need to keep up with discussions
- Ensure stakeholder information is captured in Salesforce (SMK's Customer Relationship Management system).

Support capacity-building

- Stay up-to-date on the content of SMK training and consultancy
- Offer suggestions where information needs to be updated
- Refer contacts who may benefit from our support
- Where relevant, maintain good relationships with clients and help build networks that can offer new opportunities for SMK's programme of support.

Contribute to work planning, funding & evaluation

- **Contribute to SMK's work planning and monitoring – ensuring that you are aware of colleague's priorities and they are aware of yours**
- Plan and manage your own day-to-day workload
- Look out for funding opportunities that align with SMK's priorities and values
- Contribute to maintaining clear and up to date budgets for funded projects
- Contribute to SMK's ongoing evaluation of its work (e.g. by collecting information about who has attended events or tracking feedback about a report).

Contribute to wider communications & events

- Assist in the delivery of SMK's communications: social media, writing blogs, updating the website, creating and sending project-specific newsletters
- Assist in SMK's care of its audiences: responding to telephone and email queries, attending relevant meetings and events
- Support and brief SMK staff delivering public speaking appearances
- Ensure all relevant contacts are maintained in Salesforce
- SMK runs multiple workshops, roundtables and meetings throughout the year: you may run your own or be asked to contribute to other events by, for example, liaising with attendees, sourcing speakers, suggesting policy topics for discussion and facilitating discussions.

Other

Undertake any other duties commensurate with the purpose and remit of the post.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential

- A passion for campaigning and change-making
- An understanding of issues affecting civil society and change-making in the UK
- Good research, analysis, and policy skills
- Ability to communicate complex information and ideas in accessible and interesting ways – you can produce copy that is compelling and accurate, including the ability to write and edit well in both short form (e.g. blog) and long form (e.g. report)
- Ability to carry out research aimed at deepening SMK's learning
- Good inter-personal skills
- Ability to organise events and discussions
- Good organisational skills, ability to manage own workload effectively and take initiative
- Flexible, hardworking, happy to work with a small team, and committed to continuous personal development
- Knowledge of MS365 (Word, Outlook, Excel etc).

Desirable

- Ability to support SMK's public affairs and influencing activity, especially in collaboration with other organisations
- Knowledge of the following software: Salesforce, Mailchimp, Google Forms/Sheets/Docs

How to apply

If this sounds like a role for you, you can apply online at:

<https://forms.gle/xK6b3F43S2jT8XN38>

The form will ask:

- Some basic details about you
- About your previous roles, paid or unpaid
- Your ability to do this job across the five main areas outlined in this job pack: investigate social change; communicate and share insights; support capacity-building; contribute to work-planning, funding and evaluation; and contribute to wider communications and events
- Anything else you want to tell us – this is your chance to add anything else you think is relevant
- References, who we will only contact if you are offered and accept the role (one should be your most recent employer)

SMK is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and encourages those under-represented in the sector to apply.

Before shortlisting, personal and educational identifiers (eg name, age, places of study etc) will be removed.

Deadline for applications is 11am on Wednesday 20 October 2021.

If you have any queries about the application process, please email info@smk.org.uk.

Interviews

Interviews will take place on Tuesday 2 November via Zoom.

The interview process will last around two hours, comprising:

- A short, timed exercise (one hour), which will be emailed to you, followed by
- An online interview with a panel of three (up to one hour)