SHEILA McKECHNIE FOUNDATION

UNLEASHING SOCIAL POWER

SMK CEO Recruitment Information Pack

January 2026

www.smk.org.uk

@smkcampaigners

Our history

The Sheila McKechnie Foundation (SMK) was set up in June 2005 in memory of legendary campaigner, Sheila McKechnie.

Describing herself as a “fully paid up member of the awkward squad”, Sheila led both Shelter and Which? combining a grasp of detail with a watertight argument to lead formidable campaigns. She had a high public profile and was widely known and loved, as well as feared, by many within civil society and beyond.

Her spirit, and the rigour of her approach, inspire us at SMK today.



Helping campaigners to thrive

Campaigning is vital to a healthy society. We help campaigners to thrive.

In a free and hopeful society, people need to know they have the power to make a difference: that they are able to envisage change and can push for that change to happen.

For nearly two decades, we have helped all sorts of individuals, causes and charities to find their power as changemakers – as campaigners.

We **support**, **connect** and **champion** these campaigners, equipping them to go after the social change they seek.

And we see the difference it makes. The people we're lucky enough to come into contact with – through our training, our awards, our research and our networks – do extraordinary things. They dream of a different world, and then they bring it about.

They inspire us, and others, to hold on to the hope that comes from knowing that **change is possible.**

SMK

About our approach

Supporting everyone working for social change

SMK takes a big picture view of campaigning and social change. We recognise that campaigners are trying to change lots of different things – from helping people access their rights to changing policy or attitudes at a national scale.

We also recognise that there are lots of ways to campaign, from awareness raising and community organising, to movement building and political lobbying. We know that social change typically happens when lots of people use different tactics across this broad ‘eco system’ of change.

Our job is to help campaigners and changemakers of all kinds – whether working on their own or in big organisations – understand more about how social change happens and how to design their campaigns to have the best chance of success.

At the same time, we want to build a better understanding of what social purpose campaigning is, and why it matters. And build a sense of community and solidarity among those pushing for change.

The truth is, we are all campaigners – when we need to be. Whether making sure a child gets the support they need at school or trying to shift global climate policy, this is all campaigning. And SMK is here for all of you.

What we exist to do



Support

Giving you tools to work out what actually works in campaigns.

SMK provides support to help campaigners like you think and plan clearly. Our training and consultancy support is rooted in a unique analysis of how social change happens, and expertise in a wide range of campaign disciplines.



Connect

Strengthening connections across the campaign community.

SMK has touchpoints across diverse campaign communities and disciplines. We build connections – to find common cause where it exists, better understand our differences, and share knowledge, resources and insights for change.



Champion

Protecting your right, and the space, to campaign.

SMK works to protect your space to campaign – calling on politicians to uphold your right to speak out, clearing away unreasonable barriers.

How we are funded

Support and Finances

SMK is supported by a wide range of funders who contribute to a mix of projects and our core costs. We generate a significant part of our income through our training activities and some consultancy work. This is supported by a small number of loyal associates.

Our most recently published Annual Report is available here. Our annual turnover is c£0.6m and we operate on limited reserves.

Our Governance

SMK is a registered charity in both England & Wales and Scotland and a registered company limited by guarantee. We also have Sheila McKechnie Trading, which is a subsidiary trading company. Our ten-person Board of Trustees is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of SMK, providing inclusive leadership in pursuit of our aims, objectives and goals in accordance with our governing document, legal and regulatory guidelines. Board meetings are usually held in central London with the majority of other business conducted online.

We have a small staff team, currently led by an interim Chief Executive, Katie Roberts who is in post until mid-2026. This follows the departure of our previous Chief Executive in February 2025. SMK is based in at Shelter in its Old Street office in central London.

We have a new chair, Nicole Itano, who joined in at the end of 2025. She is available for an informal conversation about the role on request.

Our next priorities

For more than 20 years, SMK has worked to support campaigners fighting to advance social justice and make the UK fairer, safer, and more accountable. But the world is changing rapidly and that means the art and science of campaigning, and what campaigners need from SMK, is changing too.

The UK social change sector is facing growing challenges, at a time when when effective campaigning is needed more than ever. We are a looking for a CEO with vision and tenacity who sees opportunity in this moment of change and who has a passion for building effective infrastructure and support systems that can support, connect, and champion campaigners and campaigns across the UK.

Over the past year, SMK has undergone a period of substantial internal change that have put us in a stronger position to respond to these changes. This includes the departure in 2025 of our long-serving CEO and Chair, along with strategic decisions by the Board of Trustees to re-focus on a set of core activities, including our campaigner training and consultancy, as well as our annual campaigner survey and awards.

Under interim CEO Katie Roberts, who joined in March 2025, SMK has strengthened our financial sustainability, fundraising, and operational delivery. The organization is now in a steadier position, with most funding for 2026 secured, a more robust fundraising pipeline, several new trustees, and a stable small but mighty team. We have also done critical foundational work on a new strategic framework.

Now we are looking for a permanent CEO to lead SMK into its next phase, translating that strategic framework into a high-impact and sustainable programme of work.

Role & Responsibilities

Role of SMK's Chief Executive

The Chief Executive provides strategic leadership and operational oversight for the Sheila McKechnie Foundation, ensuring the organisation delivers meaningful impact, remains financially sustainable, and continues to be a respected voice in social change and activism.

Leading a small, committed team, the Chief Executive will set the strategic direction, secure and steward funding, and ensure effective delivery of programmes and services. They will work closely with the Board of Trustees, act as an ambassador for the Foundation, and foster strong relationships with partners, funders, and stakeholders.

This is a hands-on role suited to a versatile leader with a passion for social change and building communities, who thrives in a small charity environment.

Role & Responsibilities

Responsibilities of SMK's Chief Executive

Strategy and Leadership

- Develop and lead the organisation's strategic vision in partnership with the Board, ensuring SMK continues to play a leading role in supporting, connecting and championing campaigners.
- Ensure SMK's strategy is translated into clear priorities, plans, and outcomes.
- Ensure the organisation remains mission-led, values-driven, and responsive to a rapidly changing external environment.
- Identify opportunities for growth, innovation, and increased impact.

Fundraising and Financial Stability

- Shape and promote a clear and compelling story of SMK's vision, mission and impact.
- Lead fundraising strategy, ensuring the organisation has a strong and diverse pipeline of funding from a range of sources including trusts and foundations, services, partnerships, consultancy work, and individual giving.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with funders, supporters, and partners.
- Ensure sound financial management, budgeting, and forecasting.
- Work with the Treasurer and Board to ensure long-term financial resilience.

Role & Responsibilities

Responsibilities of SMK's Chief Executive

Ensuring Delivery and Impact

- Oversee the effective delivery of programmes, projects, and services.
- Ensure monitoring, evaluation, and learning are embedded across the organisation.
- Balance strategic leadership with operational involvement as required in a small team.

People and Team Management

- Recruit, support, and manage a small team of staff and associates.
- Develop and maintain a principled, inclusive, and high-performing organisational culture.
- Ensure staff have clear objectives, appropriate support, and opportunities for development.
- Lead by example, modelling the organisation’s values and ways of working, and acting in accordance with SMK’s Solidarity & EDI commitments.

Role & Responsibilities

Responsibilities of SMK's Chief Executive

Governance and Board Engagement

- Work in close partnership with the Chair and Board of Trustees to ensure effective governance, strategic leadership, and organisational accountability.
- Work with the Chair to plan Board agendas, support effective meetings, and ensure appropriate follow-up on decisions.
- Provide timely, accurate, and insightful reporting to the Board.
- Ensure compliance with charity law, regulatory requirements, and best practice.

External Representation and Influence

- Act as the primary spokesperson and ambassador for the organisation.
- Represent SMK confidently with partners, funders, policymakers, and the media.
- Build and maintain strategic relationships across the sector and beyond.
- Raise the profile and credibility of the organisation and its work.

Person Specification

Personal qualities

- Demonstrate a strong and visible passion and commitment to SMK, its strategic objectives and cause.
- Values-driven, with integrity and a strong sense of purpose, and a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- A versatile and adaptable leader who is comfortable wearing multiple hats.
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build trusted relationships with funders, partners, staff, trustees and other stakeholders.
- Ability to inspire trust and confidence within the campaigner community and to lead in a networked or ecosystem role with tact and diplomacy.
- Collaborative, inclusive, and supportive leadership style.

Person Specification

Experience

Essential

- A minimum of 7-10 years senior leadership experience in a charity, social change organisation, or comparable mission-led setting. We are open to candidates who would be stepping into their first CEOs or ED role.
- At least 5 years experience working in campaigning or social change in the UK and with networks and/or infrastructure support organizations.
- Proven track record of of leading and implementing strategy and organisational development.
- A strong track record in fundraising and income generation.
- Experience of managing budgets and ensuring sound financial control, including managing restricted grant funding.
- Experience of working with, or reporting to, a Board or governing body.
- At least 5 years experience recruiting, leading and managing small teams.

Desirable

- Leadership experience in a small or medium-sized non-profit or charity.

Person Specification

Knowledge and skills

- Understanding of the UK campaigning and social change sector and community and the issues it currently faces.
- Strategic thinking combined with the ability to operate effectively at a practical level.
- Excellent communication skills, written and verbal.
- Strong relationship-building and influencing skills.
- Good understanding of governance, risk, and compliance in the voluntary sector.
- Ability to prioritise, manage competing demands, and make sound decisions.
- Understanding of best practice around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

About the Role

The Role

This is a permanent, hybrid role, at 4 or 5 days a week. The current post-holder works from our London office twice a week, but we are open to other work patterns, as well as job shares.

Location

88 Old Street, London, EC1V 9HU.

Remuneration

Salary: £60,000–£72,000 per annum (pro rata), plus benefits (25 days leave plus three days Christmas closure and pension)
Working pattern: 0.8–1.0 FTE (4–5 days per week)

Reporting

The CEO reports to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

How to Apply

Deadline

- Sunday, February 15, 11:59pm.

How to Apply

- Submit an expression of interest no more than two pages and a CV to recruitment@smk.org.uk
- This inbox can also be used to ask any questions.

Interviews

- First round interviews will be conducted remotely are expected to take place on February 27 and March 2.
- An in-person second round interview, including an opportunity to meet the team, will be held on March 9-10.

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Thank you!

SMK welcomes applications from anyone who can meet the above requirements.
We are committed to equality and providing a diverse and inclusive workplace. We particularly welcome applications from those who are significantly underrepresented in our sector, including disabled people and individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.
We are happy to discuss any accommodations or adjustments needed to support your application or participation in the interview process. Please let us know how we can assist.

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