



Scotland Malawi Partnership Volunteering Policy

Last updated 21st February 2022

Introduction:

The Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) exists to inspire the people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in an informed, coordinated and effective way to the benefit of both nations.

The SMP is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) and a registered Scottish charity (SC037048SCIO).

We are a diverse and inclusive national network which looks to harness the experience, expertise and enthusiasm that exists across Scotland for work with Malawi. While our core funding allows us to have a small secretariat, currently of 5.6FTE staff, we recognise that volunteers and volunteerism remains core to the bilateral relationship.

This policy sets out the SMP's approach to volunteering and the standards and expectations it sets for itself and its volunteers.

Policy context:

This policy sits alongside the SMP's other key policies and process documents, and the charity's constitution. We specifically ask that this policy is read alongside the SMP's Safeguarding Policy as we recognise the two inter-relate in a number of areas.

The SMP is governed by a Board of up to 16 Trustees who are volunteers and are not remunerated for the work they undertake for the organisation. Trustees have specific legal responsibilities beyond those held by other volunteers and hence there are policies specific to the Board, including the Trustee Handbook.

Why volunteers matter:

We recognise that volunteers, including the Board, play a key role within our network and that their contribution enables us to deliver more, reach a wider audience and broaden participation. We want to ensure that there are good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers, and that volunteers are well supported in their role.

- Our role is to create an open, inclusive and diverse network and we recognize the role volunteers play in helping achieve this.
- We need people from all walks of life and all communities, who can bring their different skills and experiences to our work.
- Volunteers bring a different perspective to the organisation, often reflecting the views of their local community.
- Volunteers can also help to extend the services we are able to offer.

Who is a volunteer?

A volunteer is any individual who undertakes unpaid activities on behalf of the SMP, of their own free choice. Work experience placements are different to volunteering and further guidance should be sought from line management.

Volunteers may be involved in short or long-term activities, or as a one-off. Typical activities may include:

- Sitting on a Committee to support the Secretariat and the Board
- Chairing a Member Forum
- Assisting at SMP events
- Helping design and deliver SMP activities and services

The SMP has a range of volunteering opportunities, some more formal than others. This policy is focused predominantly on formal volunteering opportunities within the SMP.

For example, a member offering to contribute to the drafting of an SMP document would be considered an informal volunteer and we recognize that not all of this policy would relate to them (e.g. if not working in the SMP offices, they would not be required to be briefed on health and safety aspects of the SMP's workplace). While there are only a few more specific, advertised volunteering roles within SMP, these are, by contrast, considered 'formal volunteers' and this policy sets out the clear mutual expectations which will frame their time with the SMP.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Each volunteer will be supported and supervised by a designated member of staff within the organisation. The designated staff member will provide guidance, support and supervision for the volunteer to ensure that their volunteering experience is a positive and rewarding one.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no contractual obligation for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks. However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability and a reciprocal set of expectations:

Volunteers can expect:

- To have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- To receive adequate support and training
- To volunteer in a safe environment
- To be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- To receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses
- To have reasonable opportunities for personal development, proportionate to their role
- To be recognised and appreciated
- To be able to say 'no' to any volunteer tasks they feel unable or unwilling to do for whatever reason
- To know what to do if something goes wrong
- To be treated in adherence to the SMP's safeguarding policy at all times

The organisation expects volunteers:

- To be reliable, open and honest
- To uphold the organisation's values and comply with organisational policies
- To make the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training
- To contribute positively to the aims of the organisation and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- To carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- To adhere to SMP's safeguarding policy at all times

Engaging volunteers:

Where more formal engagement of volunteers is required, this could include an application form, interview, taking up references and occasionally, further checks such as PVG checks, which will be undertaken in accordance with the latest guidance. Such positions would have a written role description, developed with and agreed by the volunteer, with flexibility designed to make the most of talents and motivation of the individual.

Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to. The SMP is keen to actively increase diversity and inclusion within the charity and, in all volunteer recruitment, it will consider how best to address this

The SMP is responsible for all decision-making around volunteer engagement. While the charity endeavours to offer feedback in instances where someone is not offered a volunteering placement, or a placement is ended prematurely, this cannot be guaranteed. The SMP is not under any legal or moral obligation to start or continue any volunteering position and reserves the right to end volunteering opportunities.

Induction and Training:

Volunteers will receive a full induction which will include:

- 1) An introduction to other volunteers and staff members
- 2) A copy of relevant SMP policies, including Safeguarding
- 3) Expenses Form and verbal instruction as to its completion
- 4) A tour of the SMP's offices (unless the opportunity does not involve working in the office) with particular attention to the location of exits and the assembly point
- 5) Health and Safety procedures including verbal instruction regarding the Fire Evacuation Procedure
- 6) Housekeeping e.g. use of SMP kitchen, location of toilets

In general, training will be provided by the volunteer's supervisor in an 'on the job' basis, but some roles may require formal training – e.g. in safeguarding issues.

Support and Supervision:

Each formal volunteering role will have a named supervisor. The supervisor is responsible for training and supervising the volunteer, as well as giving feedback and answering queries. They will also plan work for the volunteer.

Volunteers and supervisors will agree on appropriate arrangements for catch-up sessions, with regular communication to ensure the role is rewarding and successful for both the volunteer and the organization and with any issues or concerns identified early and quickly acted on.

Recognition:

Volunteers will be given the opportunity to share their views and opinions of their experiences of volunteering with us. When appropriate we will also recognise their contribution through social media and through the use of certificates, newsletters and by saying thank you.

Confidentiality:

All volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as staff and Board members, as laid down in any SMP policy or by verbal instruction from their supervisor. Volunteers who will have access to confidential information may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Breach of confidentiality is taken very seriously and may result in us asking the volunteer to leave.

We are bound by the Data Protection Act to ensure that we treat volunteer information with respect. Only staff who need to see information for purposes related to volunteer involvement will be able to access it. We will not pass information on without permission.

Expenses:

It is the policy of the SMP to reimburse fair out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of an individual's volunteering against the production of receipts or proof of travel payments.

Appropriate mileage expenses will be reimbursed in line with the current rates paid by HMRC (currently 45p per mile). We ask that any expenses claim which may exceed £50 receives pre-authorisation by the volunteer's supervisor.

Volunteers who volunteer for an all-day session outside of the SMP office, such as an event, are entitled to claim meal expenses up to the value of £5.00 but must provide receipts.

Problem-solving Procedure:

The SMP acknowledges that sometimes problems do arise. In the first instance, any volunteer with a complaint or concern should bring it up with their supervisor. If the issue cannot be resolved by informal discussion at this level, volunteers are able to raise concerns with the Chief Executive of the SMP, or if issues relate to the Chief Executive, to the Chair of the SMP Board.

Whistleblowing:

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports suspected wrongdoing at work. Officially this is called 'making a disclosure in the public interest'. The SMP promotes a culture of trust, support and understanding and encourages employees to raise any concerns that they may have about any wrongdoing at any level within the Organisation. Volunteers should feel equally able to raise concerns.

The SMP has a duty to protect staff and volunteers from any detriment as a result of their whistleblowing actions. This includes protection of the identity of any person who raises a concern. Whistleblowing regarding safeguarding, bullying, harassment or professional standards can be made to one or more of the below:

- The Chief Executive Officer
- The Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- The Chair of the Board
- The Vice Chair(s) of the Board

Health and Safety:

The primary duty owed to volunteers by the SMP is to ensure that they are safe while volunteering. Similarly, all employees are obliged to carry out their duties in a safe and responsible manner that does not risk harm to themselves, their colleagues or any other person.

Volunteers are required to comply with all instructions, rules and procedures concerning matters of health and safety.

Any volunteer who is concerned that any aspect of the SMP's activities poses a risk to health and safety should report this to their supervisor immediately. Genuine concerns about health and safety will always be treated with the utmost seriousness and be thoroughly investigated.

If an individual wishes or needs to use their car to carry out any aspect of their volunteering role, it is the sole responsibility of the volunteer to

- Inform their insurance company that they are using their vehicle for volunteering purposes
- Ensure they have permission to use the vehicle if they are not the owner
- Ensure that the vehicle they are using is road-legal e.g. roadworthy, appropriately taxed, insured and has a valid MOT if one is required
- Hold a valid driving licence for the vehicle that they are using

We can support volunteers by providing a template letter or list of insurance companies who generally cover volunteer driving.

Moving On:

While we encourage formal volunteers to give a reasonable amount of notice if they wish to end their volunteering, we recognize that these are not paid roles and there is no binding commitment on either the volunteer or the SMP. Both the volunteer and the SMP are equally able to end the volunteering opportunity with immediate effect, with no liability on either side.

When volunteers leave their role, they will be invited to complete an exit survey to provide feedback on their volunteer experience. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses more fully if they wish to do so. Responses from exit surveys will be anonymised and kept confidentially, although key information will be used to inform SMP's volunteering offer and ensure continuing good practice.

Diversity:

The SMP strives to be an equal opportunities organisation. This means that decisions concerning engagement and termination or any other aspect of employment and volunteering will be based on the needs of the Organisation and not on any assumption based on sex, race, age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, married or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief. This is an important commitment which all employees and volunteers are expected to share.

Volunteers are encouraged to raise with the SMP CEO (or, if relating to the CEO, the Board Chair) any discriminatory behaviour, assumptions or attitudes they encounter while volunteering and are entitled to do so free from any reprisal providing they are acting in good faith or in the reasonable belief that they are acting in the public interest.

All volunteers will be expected to have a basic understanding and commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. Volunteers may also request training in respect of diversity issues if they feel that would assist them in their volunteering role.

The SMP is very sensitive to different cultures, lifestyles, backgrounds and languages. It strives to provide equality of opportunity to ensure that individuals are given equal access to information, services etc and requires all staff and volunteers to follow these principles. We will strive to provide extra support and make reasonable adjustments, if needed, for volunteers with additional needs including disability, language or mental health.

Safeguarding:

The SMP is committed to safeguarding all who are involved in, or affected by, its work. We ask that all volunteers and all volunteer supervisors have read, signed and adhere to the SMP's safeguarding policy.

Safeguarding is the process of protecting people from abuse or neglect, enabling them to maintain control over their lives and make informed choices without coercion. It involves empowering people, consulting them before taking action[unless someone lacks the capacity to make a decision, or their mental health poses a risk to their own or someone else's safety, in which case, always acting in his or her best interests].

The Scotland Malawi Partnership embraces, and commits itself to, an ethos of 'do no harm'. We take seriously our responsibilities to all those affected by our work and we have a zero tolerance policy to the abuse of power, bullying and harassment, or other forms of misconduct.

Any volunteer who witnesses or is informed of any potential breach of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct must complete the Safeguarding Concern Report Form and inform their designated SMP supervisor of the concern as soon as possible.

If a safeguarding allegation is received against a volunteer, normal practice will be for that person to be suspended without prejudice, while an investigation is undertaken. However, where this is either not possible or appropriate, the SMP reserves the right to immediately end a volunteering placement, with no right of appeal.

Core expectations of staff and volunteers:

The SMP has four core expectations for all staff and volunteers:

(i) To work effectively with others:

- acting as part of a team;
- engaging a diverse spectrum of colleagues, partners and stakeholders;
- communicating and engaging effectively;
- displaying interpersonal awareness;
- showing respect for others.

(ii) To be committed to the work of the Partnership:

- taking responsibility for one's actions;
- being reliable and trustworthy;
- displaying effective self-management where necessary;
- having an outcome-focused approach, seeing projects through to completion;
- being punctual and meeting deadlines.

(iii) To work to the highest reasonable standards:

- taking pride in the Partnership's work;
- displaying professionalism while remaining personable;
- ensuring the reputation of the Partnership is maintained.

(iv) To embody the vision, mission and values of the Partnership:

- showing personal honesty and integrity;
- displaying mutual respect and understanding;
- Extolling the spirit of cooperation, building partnerships and alliances;
- Promoting internationalism.

Where the SMP feels these expectations are not met, the SMP reserves the right to end volunteering opportunities.

Values and Principles of the SMP:

We outline below the core values and partnership principles which underpin all the SMP does. We ask that all staff, Trustees and volunteers work within these values and principles, and the core ethos of the SMP. If the SMP feels a volunteer has fallen short of these standards, it reserves the right to immediately end a volunteering placement.

Values:

Our Values describe our approach, and our Vision and Mission can only be achieved if staff, directors, member organisations and associate members hold these values:

- Mutual respect – we recognise that the historic bilateral civil society relationship between Scotland and Malawi is built on trust and mutual respect and we celebrate its inherent reciprocity
- Cooperation - We foster a spirit of cooperation, building partnerships and alliances in pursuit of our objectives, avoiding duplication and forging creative ways to work together
- Internationalism - We stand in the tradition of Scottish internationalism, resisting isolationism and xenophobia, believing that Scotland's strength lies in building strong relationships with nations elsewhere in the world
- Service - Paramount in all our work is provision of the highest possible quality of service to our members. We strive to meet their expressed needs by offering relevant information, advice, training and resources
- Continuous improvement – we continuously strive to improve the quality of our service, as perceived by our members, to encourage viable, ethical development activity between our members and their Malawian counterparts
- Sector understanding – we understand the sector(s) in which our members are operating, both in Scotland and Malawi, and respond positively to situations which can advance developmental aspects of the Partnership
- Development – staff, directors and members are committed to encouraging links between Scotland and Malawi, to reduce poverty, promote justice and relieve suffering in Malawi. To achieve that, we all have a role to play in managing our own development and in being supportive of others

PARTNERSHIP Principles:

Planning and implementing together

Appropriateness

Respect, trust and mutual understanding

Transparency and Accountability

No one left behind

Effectiveness

Reciprocity

Sustainability

Do no Harm

Were both sides involved in the planning?

Does it fit within local government priorities?

How would you feel if you were on the other side?

Are challenges, issues and concerns listened to at both sides?

Are people excluded from your partnership?

Are both sides involved in evaluating the partnership?

Is it genuinely a two-way partnership?

Is your partnership embedded in your daily operations?

Could anyone be worse off as a result of your partnership?

Interconnectivity

Do you connect with what others are doing with Malawi?

Parity (equality)

Does everyone benefit equally from this partnership?

*For more information on the SMP's 'Partnership Principles' visit:
<http://scotland-malawipartnership.org/get-involved/principles/>*

Ethical conduct:

The SMP aims for the highest possible standards of ethical conduct in all of its activities and expects the conduct of individual volunteers to reflect this. Dishonesty of any kind will be treated as a serious matter, which may result in the immediate end of the volunteering opportunity without notice.

Gifts and hospitality:

The acceptance of gifts and hospitality from partners / business contacts, etc must not unduly influence decisions that individuals make in respect of any aspect of their volunteering within SMP.

All gifts and hospitality given or received, in excess of £10 in value, must be reported to the CEO.

No personal gifts or offers of hospitality exceeding a value of £25.00 should be accepted from a third party in the course of volunteering work without express permission from the CEO.

Any gifts which are considered to be inappropriate by the CEO will require to be returned. Allowing gifts to influence the performance of a volunteer or any decisions made by them on behalf of the Organisation will usually result in an end to the volunteering opportunity.