

Job Description



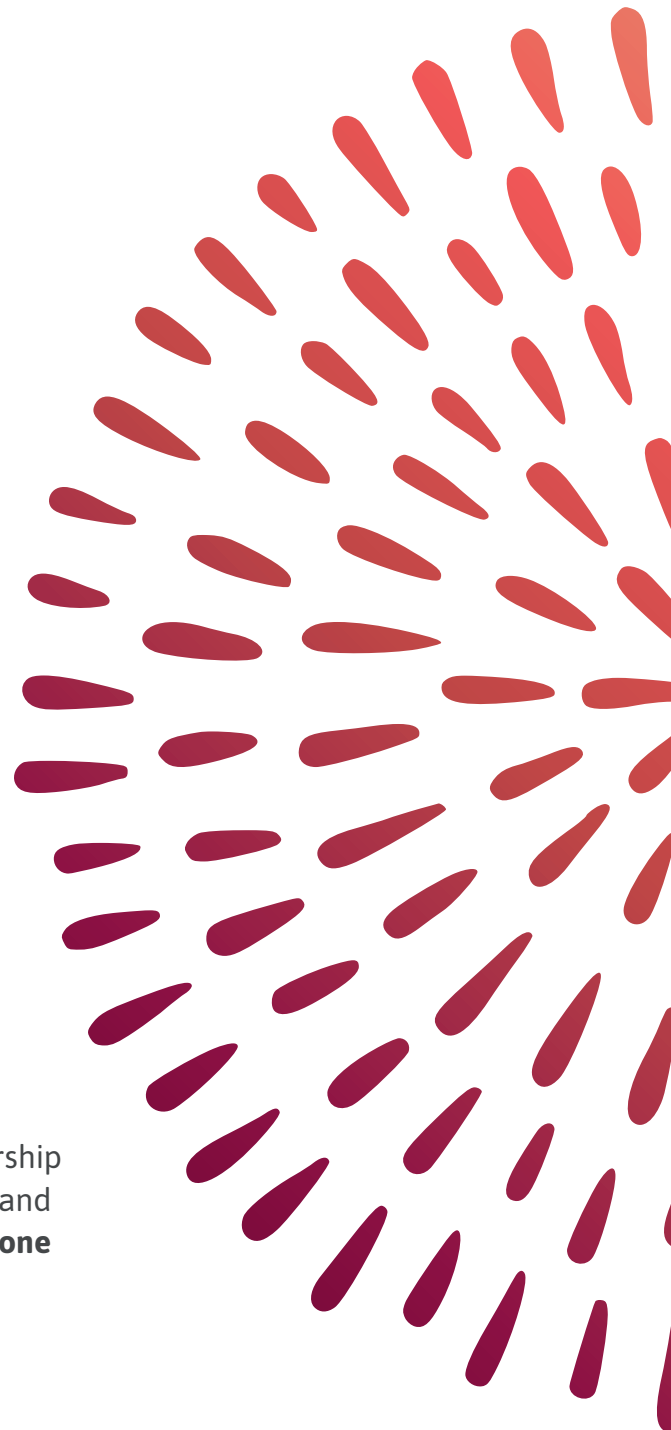
Enabling women to be financially resilient

Place-Based Partnerships Manager

Location: Home-based, with frequent travel to partnership locations across the North East, North West and Midlands; **preference for someone based in one of these regions**

Salary: £42,000 - £46,000

Contract: Permanent, Full-time



Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in joining us as our Place-based Partnerships Manager.

This is an exciting opportunity to be part of an independent charitable foundation with more than 130 years of impact.

At Smallwood, we believe that tackling women's poverty means doing more than responding to immediate need. It also means changing the systems that keep women in poverty in the first place.

We're expanding our work with place-based partnerships across England, backing local organisations that understand the challenges women face and are working together to change things.

We're looking for someone who knows how to build strong relationships, understands how change happens locally and can work alongside our partners to support their ambitions.

It's an important time to join Smallwood. You'll have a real opportunity to influence how we develop this work, connect learning across different places and help us make the most of our investment.

What we can offer you

- Generous annual leave entitlement- 25 days plus bank holidays- pro rata
- Flexible working conditions
- Employer contribution to pension scheme of 10%
- Enhanced Maternity/Shared Parental Leave and Pay
- Enhanced Sick Pay
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in the office
- Career growth and development opportunities through our commitment to learning
- By working with us you are helping to change women's lives

Purpose of the Role

Smallwood Trust is committed to advancing gender and economic justice by investing in place-based partnerships that support women experiencing poverty and financial insecurity. Through long-term funding, collaboration and shared learning, we work with local partnerships to bring about lasting change that improves the lives of women and their children.

The Place-Based Partnerships Manager will manage and develop relationships with a portfolio of partnerships across the country, supporting their work and helping them achieve their goals. The role will also contribute to shaping Smallwood's approach to place-based working, using knowledge, experience and learning from local partnerships to inform our future strategy and practice.

Values and approach

We are looking for someone who:

- Builds trusted relationships grounded in respect, integrity and understanding of local communities.
- Works collaboratively, recognising the power and responsibility that comes with being a funder and valuing partners' knowledge and leadership.
- Provides constructive challenge and asks difficult questions while maintaining positive relationships.
- Embraces feedback, reflection and learning, adapting their approach when needed.
- Navigates complexity with sound judgement, accountability and reliable follow-through.

Key Responsibilities

1. Develop and Manage Place-Based Partnerships

- Act as Smallwood Trust's lead relationship manager for a portfolio of place-based partnerships, building strong, trusting and collaborative relationships.
- Maintain regular contact with partners to understand their priorities, progress, challenges and support needs.
- Provide advice, guidance and constructive challenge to help partnerships achieve their goals, while respecting local knowledge and leadership.
- Ensure there is a shared understanding of partnership objectives, responsibilities and expectations, and that agreed actions are followed through.
- Support partnerships to reflect on their progress, evaluate their work and adapt their approaches where needed.

2. Oversee Funding, Performance and Delivery

- Manage and oversee a portfolio of partnership funding agreements
- Monitor partnership progress, budgets and delivery against agreed ambitions.
- Review progress updates and other information and identify areas where additional support may be needed.
- Identify and respond to emerging risks, challenges and opportunities, escalating significant concerns where appropriate.
- Ensure funding is managed in line with agreements, organisational policies and relevant governance standards.
- Prepare clear reports, updates and recommendations to support internal decision-making and governance.

3. Understand Local Communities and Develop Stakeholder Relationships

- Develop a strong understanding of the communities and local areas in which Smallwood's partnerships operate, including the challenges, opportunities and factors affecting women experiencing poverty and financial insecurity.
- Build and maintain relationships with key local stakeholders, including local authorities, funders, community organisations and other relevant partners.
- Understand how local services, organisations and decision-making structures work together and influence outcomes for women.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration, partnership development and future investment.
- Monitor local developments and emerging issues that may affect existing partnerships or inform Smallwood's future work.
- Represent Smallwood Trust at meetings, conferences, events and stakeholder forums.

4. Strengthen Collaboration and Shared Learning

- Working with Smallwood's Senior Manager (Partnerships and Learning):
- Bring partnerships together to share experiences, knowledge, good practice and learning.
- Encourage collaboration and stronger working relationships between partnerships across different locations.
- Facilitate discussions and learning opportunities that help partners identify common challenges and develop practical solutions.
- Connect partnerships with relevant organisations, resources, expertise and opportunities that support their work.
- Ensure opportunities for collaboration and shared learning are inclusive, relevant and responsive to partners' needs.

5. Learning and Strategic Development

- Manage and maintain a flexible monitoring and learning framework that reflects partnership objectives and Smallwood's strategic priorities.
- Gather and analyse information, evidence and learning from partnerships to understand progress and impact.
- Identify common themes, emerging challenges and successful approaches across the partnership portfolio.
- Share findings and recommendations with colleagues to inform funding decisions, organisational learning and future strategy.
- Contribute to the development of Smallwood's approach to place-based working and systems change, particularly in addressing gendered poverty and financial insecurity.
- Share Smallwood's learning and experience with external stakeholders and at relevant sector events.

Person Specification

Essential Experience

- Experience of developing and managing partnerships and building effective relationships with senior stakeholders across the voluntary, public or funding sectors.
- Experience of managing or overseeing funded programmes or partnerships, including performance, budgets, risks and delivery.
- Practical experience of place-based working and systems change, including working with organisations and stakeholders in complex local environments.
- Experience of bringing organisations or networks together to encourage collaboration, shared learning and partnership working.

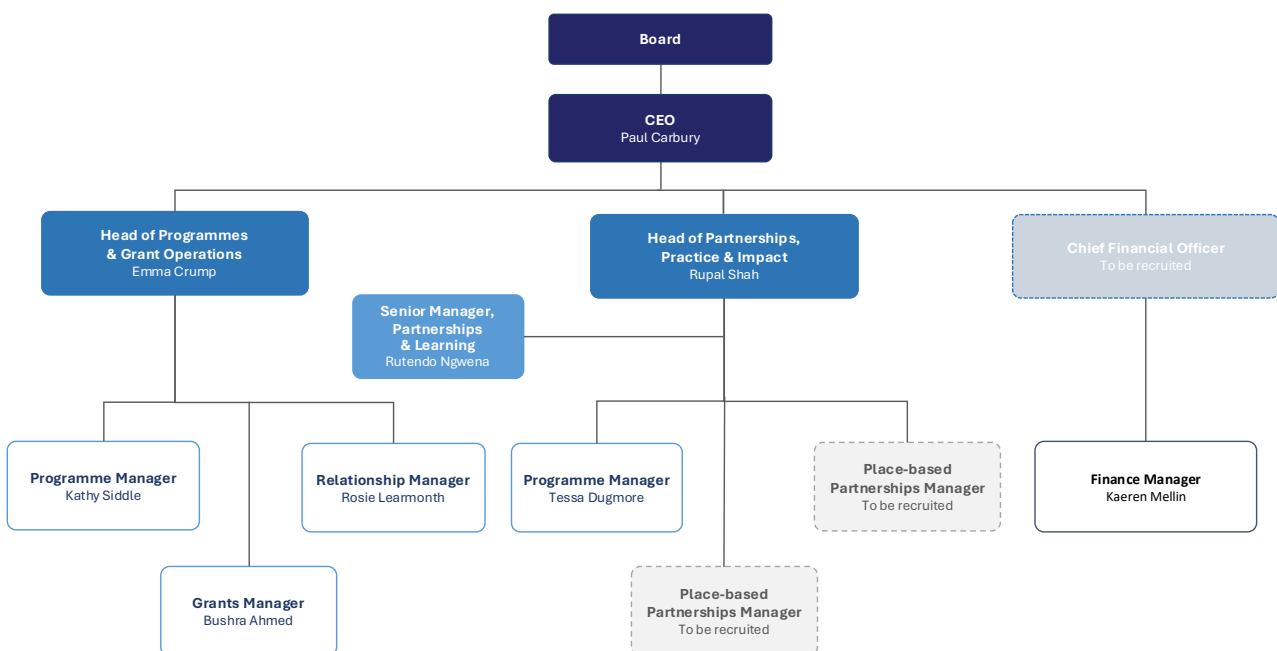
Essential Knowledge

- Understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion principles and their application in partnership working.
- Understanding of the challenges facing women experiencing poverty and financial insecurity.
- Knowledge of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and how it works with public bodies and funders.
- Understanding of monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches and how they can be used to assess progress and impact.

Essential Skills

- Excellent communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to engage, influence and work effectively with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Strong analytical skills, with the ability to interpret information, identify key issues and present clear findings and recommendations.
- Good judgement and problem-solving skills, with the confidence to address challenges and make informed decisions.
- Strong organisational and project management skills, with the ability to manage competing priorities, meet deadlines and work independently.
- Ability to work collaboratively with colleagues and external partners while taking responsibility for delivering agreed outcomes.

Organisation Chart



Recruitment process and timeline

We're committed to a recruitment process that is fair, inclusive and structured, giving you a clear sense of what to expect. The process will follow the following steps and if you make a successful application, we'll send you a more detailed breakdown ahead of time. This will usually include themes for interview questions in advance.

We will acknowledge receipt of all applications and we will send you a (standard) email if your application has not been successful. After first interview, we will offer 1-to-1 feedback.

Closing Date for applications	5pm Friday 27th November 2026
(optional) Q&A Webinar	We will be holding webinars to discuss the role and answer your questions on 2nd November at 2pm and the 11th November at 4pm . If you want to join the webinar please send an email titled 'Webinar' to recruitment@smallwoodtrust.org.uk and you will be sent joining instructions.
First interviews (online via Microsoft Teams, approx. 50 minutes)	9th and 10th December 2026 (both daytime and evening interview times will be available)
Second interviews (in-person: London, Manchester or Birmingham)	16th and 17th December 2026

How to Apply

To apply for the role, please submit the following by **5pm on Friday 27th November 2026**:

*** Your CV (please title this with your Full Name)**

*** A Cover letter answering these 3 questions. Please refer directly to examples from your previous work.**

- 1. How have you developed and managed effective relationships and partnerships in your current and/or previous roles? What challenges have you encountered and how have you managed these?** (maximum 400 words)
- 2. What are the opportunities and challenges in working in a place-based way? How do you approach these opportunities and challenges?** (maximum 400 words)
- 3. What is your approach to systems change and how would you apply this to support communities to achieve long-term change?** (maximum 400 words)

To ensure fairness across the recruitment process, please ensure you stick to the word limits for each question.

Please send CVs and covering letters by email directly to
recruitment@smallwoodtrust.org.uk

Please note, should we receive a large amount of applications for this vacancy, we reserve the right to close this vacancy prior to the advertised closing date.

In any case, applications which are received after the closing date may not be responded to.

Our strategic direction to 2036

Smallwood is entering a new chapter, building on our experience of supporting women facing poverty and investing in partnerships working to change the systems that hold them back.

This document sets out our direction for the next decade and the important role that place-based partnerships will play.

Our approach is built on this proposition: if we are to reduce gendered poverty, we must both meet immediate need and address the root causes that create it.

Over the next decade we will focus our funding, learning and influence through three interconnected priorities.

Our Goal

Women are free from the barriers holding them back – gender no longer determines who experiences and remains in poverty.



Support and strengthen

Investing in frontline organisations that provide trusted, specialist support to women experiencing poverty, insecurity, exclusion and violence, whilst strengthening the resilience, leadership and long-term sustainability of the women's sector.



Connect and convene

Investing in partnerships of place-based organisations led by and serving women that are working collectively to influence the local systems affecting women's lives. Through collaboration, shared leadership and the power of place, we will support efforts to change policy, commissioning, services and decision-making.



Learn and influence

Building and sharing evidence about what works to tackle gendered poverty, connecting local insight with regional and national conversations, and helping ensure that women's experiences shape wider policy, practice and investment.

Why now?

More than five million women in the UK are living in poverty.

Their experiences are shaped by the interaction of multiple systems and barriers including the labour market, social security, housing, caring responsibilities, health, disability, ethnicity, immigration status and violence against women and girls.

Over the last decade we have learned that whilst women need immediate support, lasting progress depends on changing the systems that create and sustain poverty in the first place. We have learned that organisations led by and serving women are uniquely placed to do both: providing trusted support to women experiencing poverty whilst also understanding the policies, practices and structures that continue to drive it.

Our role

Smallwood is a specialist funder focused on tackling gendered poverty.

We use our own investment resources, attract and deploy external funding, and act as an intermediary and partner for other funders. We invest in organisations led by and serving women, support partnerships working to change local systems, and use learning and influence to help shape wider policy, practice and investment.

Our independence, endowment, trusted relationships across the women's sector and ability to bring together different sources of funding place Smallwood in a distinctive position. We are able to connect direct support for women, stronger organisations, systems change, learning and influence as part of a single approach to tackling gendered poverty.



Our priorities

Our work is built around three connected priorities. Together they provide a single approach to tackling gendered poverty by meeting immediate need, changing local systems and influencing wider policy and practice.

Women need support now. We therefore invest in organisations that meet urgent and immediate need. At the same time, we invest in organisations working together to address the root causes of that need. Both are necessary if fewer women are to experience poverty in the future.

2

Supporting place-based partnerships to change systems

Investing in partnerships of organisations led by and serving women that are working collectively to influence the local systems affecting women's lives. Through collaboration, shared leadership and the power of place, we will support efforts to change policy, commissioning, services and decision-making.

1

Supporting women and strengthening organisations led by and serving women

Investing in frontline organisations that provide trusted, specialist support to women experiencing poverty, insecurity, exclusion and violence, whilst strengthening the resilience, leadership and long-term sustainability of the women's sector.

3

Learning, influence and policy change

Building and sharing evidence about what works to tackle gendered poverty, connecting local insight with regional and national conversations, and helping ensure that women's experiences shape wider policy, practice and investment.



What we will do

1

Supporting women and strengthening organisations led by and serving women

- **Invest in Community Grant Partnerships**, combining holistic support with individual grants that help women address immediate hardship and crisis.
- **Provide flexible multi-year funding** that helps organisations retain staff, maintain services and respond to rising demand.
- **Support specialist and by-and-for organisations** supporting women facing the greatest barriers and inequalities.
- **Invest in organisational development, leadership and resilience** where this strengthens long-term impact.

2

Supporting place-based partnerships to change systems

- **Support** a network of women-led place-based partnerships across England.
- **Invest** in partnership development, systems leadership, learning and influence.
- **Support partnerships** to influence local policy, commissioning, service design and institutional practice.
- Strengthen the role of women and women's organisations in local decision-making.

3

Learning, influence and policy change

- **Generate and share evidence** on what works to tackle gendered poverty.
- **Support organisations and partnerships** to influence local and regional decision-making, particularly within emerging devolved structures.
- **Build stronger connections** between local learning and national policy debates.
- **Work with advocacy, research and policy organisations** to amplify the experience and priorities of women experiencing poverty.



Supporting the change

Our North Star

Women are free from the barriers holding them back - gender no longer determines who experiences and remains in poverty.

The problem

UK poverty is gendered - women are more likely than men to live in poverty, driven by their position across the labour market, social security, family roles, health, age and disability.

Our approach

Investing in organisations that support women, in partnerships of organisations that seek to change systems and using learning to influence policy, funding and wider systems.

Our contribution

Our assets - funding, endowment, reach and learning - deployed through equitable, relational funding, advocacy, lived experience and collaboration.

0-5 years

Women gain stability, confidence and agency; organisations and partnerships grow stronger and more coordinated; systems begin to shift.

5-10+ years

Sustained security for women; influential, resilient women-led organisations; durable partnerships; measurable systems reform through a gender lens. Future generations of women live free from gendered poverty, with accountable public systems and a gender lens applied across policy.

What does success look like?

- Future generations of women and their children will have stable and secure financial futures.
- Local and national government consistently apply a gender lens across policy, commissioning and service design, addressing the structural drivers of women's poverty.
- Public systems are accountable to women experiencing poverty, violence and exclusion, resulting in sustained reform of housing, welfare, immigration, employment and police/judicial systems.
- Women are able to live free from poverty-related harm, with increased safety, security and access to their rights and entitlements.

Our approach to funding

We take an intersectional approach to our funding as we recognise that gendered poverty is experienced differently. Women's experiences are shaped by multiple and intersecting inequalities and barriers, including those connected to race, disability, age, immigration status, caring responsibilities and violence against women and girls.

We seek to understand and address those inequalities in how we fund and work. We will actively identify and challenge systemic barriers, deepen our work on equity and inclusion, and support organisations led by and serving women who face the greatest barriers and inequalities.

The Trust remains committed to approaches that have consistently underpinned its grant-making, including:

- Providing flexible and, where appropriate, unrestricted funding that strengthens organisational resilience and long-term impact;
- Trust-based and relational grant-making that emphasises partnership, dialogue and proportionate accountability;
- Supporting organisations led by and serving women to identify local priorities and solutions; and
- Using learning and evaluation to improve practice, strengthen impact and inform future investment decisions.

Our place-based partnerships are central to putting this approach into practice. As we expand this work, we want to build strong, trusting relationships with local partners, learn from their experience and support them to bring about lasting change for women.

The Place-Based Partnerships Manager will play an important role in helping us achieve this.