

Job Description

Section 1 – Description

Job Title: Policy and Communications Officer, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)

Location: Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE), 11 Queen Street, Edinburgh

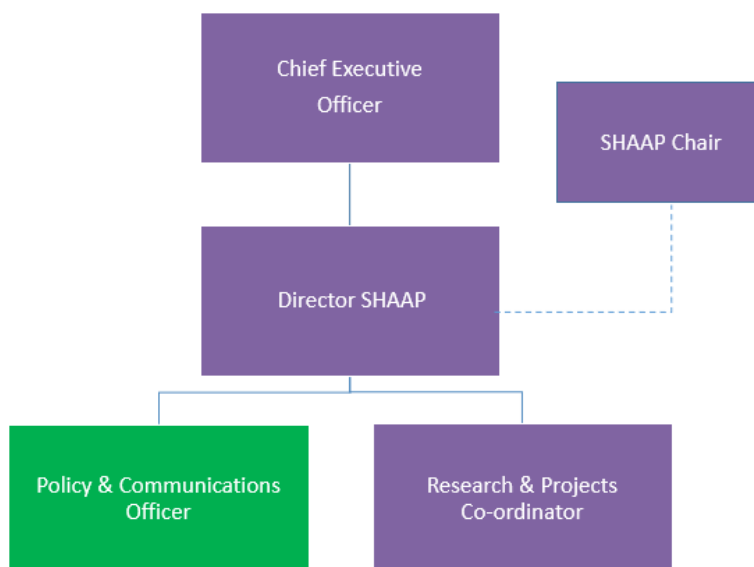
Reports to: Director, SHAAP

Date: October 2025

Section 2 – Job Purpose

The Policy and Communications Officer leads SHAAP's communications activities with all stakeholders, including policy makers, journalists, healthcare professionals and the public, to support the delivery of SHAAP's strategic objectives. The post holder does this through monitoring policy and political developments to identify opportunities to advocate for policy to reduce alcohol harms and helping to develop evidence-based policy positions, with oversight from the SHAAP Director. The post holder is also responsible for proactively engaging with the media to help raise the profile of SHAAP's work, for maintaining an effective online presence and for maintaining relationships with key stakeholders in order to make the case for reducing harms from alcohol.

Section 3 – SHAAP Organisation Chart



Section 4 – Dimensions

- Support the SHAAP Director in developing and delivering research and advocacy projects including in-person events across a range of alcohol-related policy issues (2 per year approximately).

- Respond to government consultations and produce policy briefings and reports for external and internal stakeholders (2 per month approximately).
- Co-ordinate responses to external policy developments (variable).
- Liaise with Director and Steering Group members regarding the development of policy positions (4 per year, for consideration at Steering Group meetings).
- Monitor policy and political developments and proactively identify opportunities for expanding SHAAP's political influence.
- In conjunction with the Director, work with journalists to ensure an evidence-based approach to reducing alcohol harms is represented in the media.
- Update and maintain SHAAP's online presence to ensure effectiveness (website, social media)
- Work in coordinated manner with Director, and Research and Projects Co-ordinator.
- Where needed, provide administrative and minutes support to SHAAP Steering Group.
- Represent SHAAP at relevant stakeholder meetings where agreed with the SHAAP Director.

Section 5 – Main Responsibilities

- Monitor relevant policy and political activities and pro-actively pursue opportunities for extending SHAAP's influence with MSPs in the Scottish Parliament.
- Keep team well-informed about latest research on alcohol harms and related policy.
- Liaise with Director and Steering Group members regarding the development of policy positions.
- Research and draft topic-specific briefing papers in line with SHAAP policy objectives and support the development of evidence-based policy positions.
- Advise the SHAAP Director on media and policy activity on alcohol and opportunities for pro-active media and policy engagement.
- Be the first point of contact for media enquiries.
- Brief the SHAAP Director, Chair and Steering Group members prior to media appearances.
- Develop and maintain relationships with relevant colleagues at partner organisations, RCPE and member colleges to facilitate the sharing of research and policy information and intelligence and to advocate for and promote SHAAP campaign and policy positions.
- Represent SHAAP in agreed external meetings, groups and at events.
- Work with the SHAAP Director and Steering Group and external agencies to produce SHAAP publications, information and promotional materials.
- Support and, where agreed with the Director, lead on SHAAP media activities, including cultivating relationships with media outlets, producing media briefings and securing uptake of stories about SHAAP's work and policy positions.
- Produce and manage content for the SHAAP website and social media channels.
- Develop – with input from the wider team – plans for projects that support SHAAP's strategic objectives then lead on delivery.
- Co-ordinate, research and draft SHAAP's responses to external policy consultations, including liaising with appropriate stakeholders on evidence and expertise to underpin SHAAP responses.
- Organise events that support the delivery of SHAAP's strategic objectives.
- Ensure office systems and ways of working within the team are maintained effectively.
- Undertake relevant professional training activities as agreed with the SHAAP Director.

Section 6 – Planning and Organising

- Planning timescales can vary involving organising projects, campaigns or events over several months to co-ordinating consultation responses with tight deadlines or dealing with media enquiries/events on a daily basis.
- Organise own workload.
- Ensure effective communication with the SHAAP Director, Research and Projects Co-ordinator, Steering Group, and external stakeholders.
- Co-ordinate responses to external consultations and ensure approved responses are submitted within deadlines.

- Organise and produce policy briefings, often at short notice.
- Co-ordinate and prepare responses to media enquiries and interviews, with sign-off from the Director.
- Ensure the website and social media are used optimally to communicate SHAAP priorities.
- Balance ad hoc and unplanned work with business as usual such as website content management.

Section 7 – Decision Making

- Recognise the level of detail and style of communication appropriate to different stakeholders.
- Recognise when input from others is needed, while respecting others' workloads.
- Assess the need to brief or seek direction from Director and SHAAP Steering Group
- Set and achieve deadlines for all tasks, including responses to policy consultations and production of briefing papers and reports.
- Contribute to decisions continuous improvement of effective team working.
- Recognise when to refer matters to Director or Chair outwith Director's core hours.
- Assess levels of confidentiality of different areas of work.

Section 8 – Internal and External Relationships

Internal

SHAAP Director
 SHAAP/SARN Research and Projects Co-ordinator
 Chair of SHAAP Steering Group
 SHAAP Steering Group
 Colleagues in RCPE departments
 Policy and Communications colleagues in member colleges

External

MSPs, MPs, political party representatives, and their researchers/staff
 Journalists and media organisations
 Civil servants
 Voluntary and public sector staff
 Clinicians
 Academics and researchers
 Members of the public
 Policy and public affairs colleagues in partner and membership organisations

Section 9 – Person Specification: Knowledge, Experience, Skills Required

Essential

- Educated to degree level, ideally with a relevant postgraduate qualification.
- Relevant professional experience.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Excellent IT skills and experience.
- Highly-organised; able to self-manage and work as part of a team.
- Demonstrable knowledge of Scottish politics: systems, parties and context.
- Demonstrable ability to advise on, help develop and communicate SHAAP policy positions.
- Demonstrable ability to build, maintain and utilise relationships with different groups of stakeholders, both internal and external.
- Demonstrable persuasive influencer.
- Well experienced in researching and drafting briefings, and/or policy papers and/or consultation responses.
- Experience of organising in-person and online professional events.

- Ability to analyse critically and present research findings for a range of stakeholders.
- Ability to represent SHAAP at internal and external meetings, seminars and conferences.
- Demonstrable competence in using a range of communications channels for maximum impact to support advocacy.

Desirable

- Demonstrable knowledge of public health issues.
- Experience of leading on media activity.
- Knowledge of alcohol policy in Scotland.
- Experience of use of Artificial Intelligence for gathering research and intelligence.

Section 10 – Job Context and Special Features

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) is based at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE). Using the best available evidence, SHAAP provides the authoritative clinical voice on how policy makers and clinicians can reduce alcohol-related harms in Scotland. SHAAP is advised by a Steering Group made up of members of the Medical Royal Colleges in Scotland, the Faculty of Public Health in Scotland and invited experts.

SHAAP works in partnership with a range of organisations in Scotland and beyond. Key partners include Alcohol Focus Scotland,, the Scottish Alcohol Research Network (SARN), the Scottish Recovery Consortium, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs, the Alcohol Health Alliance, the Institute of Alcohol Studies, Eurocare, and the World Health Organization (Europe).

The post of Policy and Communications Officer is the key role in providing support to the Director and SHAAP Steering Group Members and provides SHAAP's eyes and ears with regard to external policy, media and research developments, thus ensuring that SHAAP is ideally placed to maximise the potential for, and does not miss any opportunities for, progressing its policy-influencing agenda.

As with many small voluntary sector organisations, staff can find themselves undertaking a wide range of duties ranging from professional tasks to undertaking administrative work in support of the organisation.

This job description will be updated and amended from time to time in accordance with the requirements of the job and the changing needs of the College.