SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION
1. Job details

Job title: Senior research officer
Responsible to: Research manager
Directorate/Team: Public policy and volunteering department / Research unit

2. Job purpose

The purpose of the role is to develop, deliver and communicate research for NCVO to deliver our five strategic priorities. This in particular should strengthen our capability to champion and strengthen volunteering and the voluntary sector. The purpose of this senior post is also to act an advocate for NCVO research and public policy, volunteering and the voluntary sector more widely.

3. Dimensions

- Day-to-day management and delivery of research projects, as agreed with the research manager
- Delegated responsibility for income generation, as agreed with the research manager
- Monitoring of project expenditure, as agreed with research manager
- Line management of staff and volunteers, as agreed with research manager
4. Organisation chart

![Organisation chart]

5. Main accountabilities of the post

**Leadership, management and delivery**
- Development and project management of research projects, for internal and external stakeholders, across the breadth of NCVO’s interest in volunteering and the voluntary sector
- Identification of ideas and opportunities for new work, taking the lead on developing proposals and applications where appropriate
- Daily management of substantive research projects, acting as the point of contact for stakeholders
- Undertaking all aspects of research: methodological design, fieldwork, writing and reporting

**Communication and advocacy**
- Communication of the role and work of NCVO research, acting as an advocate for volunteering and the voluntary sector
- Communication of NCVO’s research findings to internal and external stakeholders
- Acting as an advocate for NCVO in discussions with funders, policy makers and the research community
Management

- Management of staff (currently research assistant) and volunteers as required
- Responsible for day to day expenditure on projects

6. Work context

Each day, millions of people make a difference to the causes they believe in through voluntary organisations and volunteering. This thriving voluntary sector and volunteer movement are essential for a better society – especially in times of challenge and change. That’s why, inspired and empowered by our 13,000 members, NCVO champions the voluntary sector and volunteering. We do this by connecting, representing and supporting voluntary organisations, from the smallest community groups to the largest charities. The post is located at NCVO’s London office.

The public policy and volunteering department is led by the director of public policy and volunteering. It is made up of the following:

- Policy and public services team
- Research unit
- External relations unit
- Volunteering development unit

We have a reputation as an authoritative voice for the sector: our robust, actionable policy positions and campaigns are built upon a strong research and evidence base and an engaged membership. We develop and maintain excellent relations with stakeholders in the voluntary sector, business, government and the media to ensure that the sector is represented effectively at the highest levels. Our primary aim is to champion the voluntary sector and volunteering by influencing the external policy environment, both nationally and internationally. We also aim to strengthen voluntary organisations by providing advice and support around areas such as lobbying and campaigning. In short, we’re serious about public policy because we want to help volunteers and voluntary organisations make the biggest difference they can.

The research unit leads NCVO’s work to build the evidence base for volunteering and the voluntary sector. We also aim to strengthen the sector’s ability to use data and research-based evidence to make a bigger difference. We support the sector through published insight, consultancy support, networking and events, and data.

The unit is able to draw upon a large and highly experienced pool of staff and associates, extensive experience in qualitative and quantitative research, data manipulation and analysis skills, and a well-respected advisory group.Externally, our reputation and practical, relevant outputs are highly
regarded: our Almanac data and analysis are relied upon by government, the sector and the Office for National Statistics. We are the partner of choice for volunteering and voluntary sector research in the UK and beyond.

The other departments are enterprise and development, and planning and resources.

NCVO is Positive about Disabled People.

7. Autonomy and decision-making

- Ensuring that specific projects are delivered within a set project timescale and to budget
- Project managing multiple projects, often involving cross team and cross staff teams
- Recommending expenditure within defined limits in NCVO’s financial procedures manual
- Line management of staff and volunteers as appropriate

8. Communications

The post holder needs strong communication skills with the ability to market, influence and inform both in writing and orally. In addition the post communicates with internal and external groups as follows:

**Internal**

Communicates with staff across NCVO including team/unit Leaders. Works across the organisation to raise awareness and understanding of research issues. This includes communicating with other teams to share knowledge and experience, and where relevant to influence relevant policies and processes.

**External**

The post holder regularly and frequently communicates, negotiates with and influences middle and senior managers, to manage projects or secure support for NCVO’s research work.

The post holder communicates with external stakeholders so that NCVO research has an impact and so that NCVO is identified as an authoritative source. The post holder communicates using a range of approaches (writing reports, blogging and using social media, speaking in public) with the intention of informing and influencing policy and practice.
9. Main areas of difficulty

- **Technical/subject understanding:** The post requires a broad understanding of research methods and the ability to make judgements about the quality and veracity of third party research, including academic research. Detailed, up-to-date subject understanding covering a broad field (volunteering and/or the voluntary sector) is also required.

- **Workload:** The post holder must balance and prioritise the management and delivery of work for internal and external stakeholders. Planning is likely to be interrupted by the need to respond quickly to external events and media/policy pressure.

- **Influencing and communication:** As per section 8 of the job description, the role requires influencing skills. The job-specific difficulty relates to the challenge of communicating research methods and findings, which are sometimes complex and detailed.

10. Essential knowledge and skills required

**Knowledge**

- Educated to degree level, or equivalent skills/experience gained in a research or market research environment
- Understanding of social science research methods and tools
- Knowledge of policy and practice issues in volunteering and the voluntary sector

**Skills**

- Social science research skills, including research design
- Digital skills: social media for research and communications, research/office/CRM software
- Communication skills: writing for and presenting to non-technical audiences
- Interpersonal skills: influence and build effective partnerships at senior levels
- Team-working skills: work collaboratively, and on own initiative

**Experience**

- Working in a busy research function in a public policy environment
- Managing and delivering research projects within budget and to agreed deadlines
- Communicating research findings for non-technical audiences
11. General information

To, at all times, adhere to NCVO’s policies on:

- equal opportunities
- diversity and dignity at work
- health and safety
- confidentiality
- no smoking
- environment and sustainability.