

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title:	Finance Operational Services FOS Officer
Directorate & Section/Unit:	Chief Executive – Finance / FOS
Reporting to:	FOS Senior Officer / FOS Manager
Responsible for:	
Salary Grade:	Scale 5
DMA Management Level:	Frontline staff
DMA Span of Control (Direct Reports):	n/a

Purpose of job:

To support the Finance Operational Services (FOS) Leadership Team in providing strategic, statutory and core financial services to directly support the Council in helping to maintain, improve and deliver frontline services for Worcestershire's customers, residents and businesses.

This will include:

- To drive, develop, and provide effective and proactive challenge to the FOS processes within their remit
- To provide support to internal and external customers with information advice, research and guidance as required and to ensure that resources available are used effectively
- To work as part of a cohesive team assisting to ensure the service is responsive, flexible, efficient and customer focused
- To ensure that Authority and Directorate financial procedures and statutory requirements are applied effectively and are in accordance with the scheme of delegation and financial regulations
- To provide excellent customer service with responsibility for owning the progress of complex customer queries by thoroughly investigating, gathering information, and consulting as appropriate
- To proactively problem solve, suggesting innovative resolutions and consistently understand and contribute to the team goals and demonstrate defined key behaviours

Main Activities & Responsibilities:

Providing information, advice and support to internal and external customers:

- Provide information, advice and support to internal and external customers on all aspects of the service (e.g. COP, DPA, CCA etc.) and ensure financial governance is adhered to
 - To develop best practice approaches to the range of delivered FOS services and suggest proposals for improvement
 - To maintain financial system data records and user settings as appropriate across a range of systems (e.g. ContrOCC, LAS, E5, Caspar, Synergy etc.)
 - To support the delivery of FOS services following new developments or government policy changes and advise Management accordingly on the impact and implication of the proposed changes
 - To provide advice on correct service practices and processes
 - To provide information and accurate working papers in response to reports, escalations, complaints and complex queries as appropriate including auditor and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) queries
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- To provide system training for internal and external customers as required (e.g. Provider Portal, ContrOCC reports etc.)
- To research best practice information from other organisations and advise management on potential service improvement
- To ensure that SLAs are met for the swift resolution or progression of queries received by liaising with colleagues and other third party and outside bodies e.g. Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP); WCC Adults Services Commissioning; as appropriate as well as families and solicitors
- To perform Daily/ Weekly/ Monthly routines in accordance with current procedures and actively identify and advise management of improvements additions and changes.
- To be responsible for promoting the safety and welfare of vulnerable customers alerting the safeguarding concerns to the appropriate officer
- To liaise with, take direction from and collaboratively work with professional colleagues and partners in the best interest of the customer
- To provide explanations and working papers for reports, complaints and complex queries as appropriate
- To proactively support the preparation and submission of service KPIs, SLA's and other relevant statistics; identifying any anomalies and taking ownership to swiftly investigate the cause, impact, and solution before reporting to line manager.
- To deliver tasks defined in the FOS Daily/Weekly/Monthly Schedule to ensure service requirements and deadlines are consistently met.

Supervisory responsibilities & development:

- To ensure the delivery of an effective, high performance, customer focussed service that is continuously improving
- To deputise as appropriate for the Senior Officer
- To support Senior Officer in the development of the service ensuring consistency of approach across the council
- To input into the annual Finance Service Delivery Plan.

Individual responsibilities & development to team:

- To maintain an effective and relevant working knowledge of financial and service specific legislation
 - To maintain a current knowledge of developments in professional practice including a programme of self-development to ensure skills, knowledge and understanding are maintained and enhanced
 - To ensure a personal responsibility for Continuous Professional Development
 - To take an active role in the objectives of the wider financial management service
 - To develop and maintain professional relationships both internally and externally
 - Maintaining relevant working knowledge of relevant legislation
 - Personal responsibility to manage priorities for workloads and conflicting deadlines
 - To act as a role model for new staff where appropriate, e.g. in providing an overview of FOS team processes and procedures
 - Supporting the production and submission of statutory returns e.g. HMRC, OPG, DFE etc.
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Managing change and improvements

- Implementing changes to procedures and policy as directed
- Implementing cultural change and reviewing service requirements as directed
- To support managers and colleagues in the development of the change programme within finance and take an active role in the delivery of an effective and reliable service for internal and external customers.

Along with all the above, specific responsibilities exist within different teams. The following activities are dependent upon the area of FOS that the post relates to:

Accounts Payable

- To administer the Council's Procurement Card scheme in line with SLA. Including: maintaining card limits and cancellations as requested, receiving and distributing Procurement cards from card provider, update SDOL system
- To process Accounts Payable invoices in line with SLA and agreed procedures, including the uploading and payment of invoices in line with current legislation including HMRC Construction Industry Scheme, and VAT
- To maintain supplier records in line with SLA and agreed procedures
- To identify duplicate and incorrect payments using available reporting tools and investigation and take appropriate action in line with procedures and SLA
- To investigate and resolve BACS recalls and returned, stopped or out of date WCC issued cheques, cancelling and re-issuing as necessary in line with SLA.

Schools Funding

- Co-ordinate, collect and manage data from Early Years providers regarding the early years nursery education funding (NEF), Early Years pupil premium (EYPP) and Disability Access fund (DAF) in line with statutory guidance
- Reconcile data with other relevant data sources, for example neighbouring local authorities. Liaise with early years providers where necessary to correct duplicate claims
- Co-ordinate and ensure that accurate Early Years nursery education funding (NEF) payments are made to early years providers in accordance with established timescales resolving any payment issues or concerns
- Ensure accurate and correct payments of SEN inclusion funding, liaising with the SEN inclusion manager in WCF to achieve this
- Partnership working across various teams in Worcestershire Children's First including the business support team, Inclusion team and Nursery Education Funding team as well as our external partners running the family information services across Worcestershire and Other local authorities to share information and good practice and processes including accurate headcounts, cross border checks and early years census
- Assist Worcestershire Children's First with the auditing of providers in receipt of nursery education funding to ensure the nursery education funding is claimed as per statutory guidance.

Adult Direct Payments

- To reconcile income and expenditure activity through desktop Audits of Adult Direct Payment – Prepaid Card Accounts, examining transactions and using analytical skills to identify patterns and discrepancies and to perform further analysis of any issues uncovered, including liaising with customers or social workers where necessary
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- To administer Adults Direct Payments – Prepaid card accounts payments, acting as the lead in processing account set ups, closures, and suspensions
- To run and review audit reports examining the wider use of Adult Direct Payment Accounts, and to report on activity to finance staff, social workers, and senior managers
- To ensure that Audits on Direct Payment Accounts (prepaid and managed) are carried out in line with SLA. Liaising with Social Workers and families to ensure any surplus direct payment monies identified are reclaimed back accurately and in a timely manner
- To ensure the production of regular reports of the findings on the client reviews and communicate findings to the client and update appropriate records and systems accurately.

Transactional Support for Payments and Income

- To support the resolution of goods received imbalances, following related financial procedures as necessary
- To support blocked and late paid invoices, assisting in their clearance as required
- To raise and amend framework orders, purchase orders and payment requests for non-invoice payments as required and arrange for their authorisation by the appropriate officer
- To enter approved journals and accounting transfers including virements into the general ledger on behalf of all directorates as instructed.

Brokerage

- To work closely and positively with providers, health partners and social care colleagues, in taking responsibility for monitoring the performance and quality of providers, and availability of all placements/packages for adults in order to ensure the highest standard of service is consistently available to our customers
- To ensure that requests for placement/care packages are consistently in line with the County Council's policies/contracts Service Level Agreements (SLA) and, using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), review they are representing best value to the Council
- To be responsible for ensuring that block contracts are used appropriately, filling vacancies as a priority, and ensuring that payments made to providers for any unused periods (voids) are minimised
- To proactively administer the Adult Care Provider Portal in line with procedures and SLA. To involve seeking customer feedback and ensuring we are looking to develop and improve current functionality
- To liaise with managers and colleagues in Procurement to identify gaps in the market and potential new providers.

Appointees and Deputies

- To liaise with professional bodies as appropriate including swift liaison with HMRC regarding Income Tax payments; Office of Public Guardianship (OPG) for reports; funeral directors to arrange and pay for the funerals as appropriate, and where necessary with the Treasury Solicitor concerning disposal of assets; and carrying out the instructions contained in the Sealed Order issued by the Court of Protection, including delivering in person and serving Court of Protection application notification to Deputy Clients
 - To notify to the DWP of changes in maintenance rates, hospital admissions, discharges and other changes affecting entitlement as necessary
 - To ensure that all clients receive their full entitlement of DWP benefits as appropriate
 - To make initial applications to the Court of Protection with correspondence and enquiries as necessary in accordance with SLA and procedures
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- To set up and manage individual bank accounts, maintain accurate records of income received and payments made from Deputy/Appointee's client's individual bank accounts; updating and reconciling all appropriate accounts and systems in line with SLA and processes
- To pay all maintenance payments, personal needs allowance and utility bills in a timely and accurate manner
- To maintain financial records for completion of the Annual Accounts to Office of Public Guardianship (OPG), in particular: case management system (Caspar) and ContrOCC.

Court of Protection (COP)

- To support members of the public that are applying for Court of Protection Deputyship due to a family member being assessed as lacking mental capacity, ensuring COP referrals are reviewed and actioned promptly and requesting updates as appropriate
- To support applications for the Court of Protection/deferred property account and other debts
- To issue care cost statements for Court of Protection along with Financial Assessment forms.

Workflow Business Unit (WBU)

- To lead on providing flexible ad-hoc support in undertaking specialised tasks as required for other FOS teams
- Responsible for liaising with the Customer Contact Centre ensuring that queries are responded to in accordance with SLA
- Agree and set up instalment plans to be paid by Direct Debit in accordance with SLA and policy
- To lead on routine tasks across FOS teams, e.g. Post duties including logging receipt of items as appropriate; assisting with ensuring excellent customer service across all FOS areas including: financial assessments for customers in accordance with specified service standards, within defined legislation and timescales.

Deferred Payments

- Ensure Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA) reviews in order for customers to check remaining equity available for the DPA loan, and to notify relevant staff of any cases reaching equity exhaustion
- Ensure care, interest, or where admin fees are purchased correctly in order to enable redemption statements to be automatically produced by ContrOCC. To be able to produce a DPA Statement manually if required
- To provide Deferred Payment redemption statements and property sale completion statements as required ad hoc or as part of Deferred Payment Reviews
- Screen all Deferred Payment Referrals to ensure they meet requirements
- Request the relevant land registry searches to determine ownership of property, to inform eligibility decisions.

Income

- To set up and monitor instalment payment plans according to procedures, SLA and Scheme of Delegation
 - To process customer account payment transfers and adjustments, Customer credit note approvals, credit and debit card payment refund requests, and monthly salary deduction payments in line with SLA and Scheme of Delegation
 - To reconcile income feeder totals in line with SLA and Scheme of Delegation
 - To oversee bank and cheque payment process and hold regular bank reconciliation review meetings, including recording, monitoring, and recovering of unpaid cheque and Direct Debit default payments in line with SLA
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- To check and approve/reject new customer records and upload customer record files to the Finance System in line with SLA
- To liaise with the internal and external customers to facilitate the recovery of outstanding debt and income in line with SLA, e.g. supplier offset arrangements
- To prepare refunds and write off documentation, and arrange for authorisation in line with SLA
- To raise invoices, collect and reconcile income relevant to service area needs e.g. bus company income, Client Charges income, gypsy rent income and to facilitate the recovery of outstanding debt in line with SLA.
- To be responsible for ensuring new Direct Debit mandates and BACs reports for cancellations, rejected and default Direct Debit payments are processed in line with SLA.

Debt

- To report on customers in liquidation/administration to ensure appropriate action is taken to secure dividend payment or to ensure write off is actioned, when payment cannot be secured
- To pursue Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA) debtors or representatives for outstanding monies and arranging payment terms
- To monitor debt, bringing any significant variations or unusual events to the attention of the appropriate budget holder or Team Leader
- To prepare refunds and write offs, maintain master control list and pass to the appropriate officer for authorisation
- To provide financial advice and support to Authority staff on all aspects of debt recovery and ensure financial governance is adhered to
- To sensitively handle all interactions with clients and/or their representatives in relation to collection of Debt payments owed to the Council
- To review and report on debts in query (including debts to be cancelled) and follow up with Service Departments to ensure disputes are resolved and incorrect invoices are cancelled promptly.

Insurance

- To deal with claims under the schools in house property scheme as required
 - To raise payments and reconcile expenditure and income against losses
 - To undertake recovery of uninsured property losses
 - To support the preparation of underwriting information required to ensure best value is achieved on the Council's insurance programme
 - To submit claims against the Council's insurers in line with SLA for losses incurred to assets insured under the Council's insurance programme
 - To progress to resolution claims made against the Council in an accurate and sensitive manner and in accordance with the relevant civil procedure rules, case law and appropriate legislation including liaison with claimants, other directorates, claims handlers / insurers, contractors, engineers, and solicitors
 - To proactively challenge and verify claims costs
 - To support the preparation of budgets, premium allocation and charges as required and support the management of the optional insurance schemes made available to schools
 - To provide the insurance service to Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority.
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Generic Accountabilities:

- To maintain personal and professional development to meet the changing demands of the job, participate in appropriate training activities and encourage and support staff in their development and training
- To undertake other such duties, training and/or hours of work or travel as may be reasonably required, and which are consistent with the general level of responsibility of this job
- To undertake health and safety duties commensurate with the job and/or as detailed in the Directorate's Health and Safety Policy
- The duties described in this job description must be carried out in a manner which promotes equality of opportunity, dignity and due respect for all employees and customers and is consistent with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Contacts:

In all contacts the post holder will be required to present a good image of the Directorate and the County Council as well as maintaining constructive relationships.

- Internal:** Senior Managers, Management Teams, Managers & Staff across all directorates, Worcestershire Children First (WCF) Project Staff, Head Teachers and other school-based staff
- External:** District & County Councils, Government Agencies & Departments including Department for Work and Pensions, HMRC, Healthcare Professionals, Police, Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), Local Government Ombudsman, Fire, Probation Service, Educational Settings, Suppliers, Contractors, Service providers, Statutory and Voluntary Organisations, clients, customers

Additional Information:

- The Council reserves the right to alter the content of this job description, after consultation to reflect changes to the job or services provided, without altering the general character or level of responsibility
 - Reasonable adjustments will be considered as required by the Equality Act.
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Author: Charles Huntington

Date: 04/01/2023

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*** WCC is aiming towards a 5-level management organisational structure with level 5 being the Chief Executive.**

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job Title: Finance Operational Services (FOS) Officer
Directorate & Section/Unit: Chief Executive – Finance / FOS
Salary Grade: Scale 5

EXPERIENCE: (Of delivering outcome/objectives/service improvements etc, not just time served)

It is **essential** that the post holder has:

- Significant experience of working in a Finance environment
- Significant experience in interrogating and maintaining multiple ICT systems in a financial working environment
- Significant experience of using Microsoft Office
- Significant experience of working effectively as part of a team and demonstrate flexibility in approach to tasks.

It is **desirable** that the post holder has:

- Considerable experience of working in a relevant service environment
- Considerable experience of Local Government services and customer base in a relevant area
- Considerable experience of delivering support to a relevant customer base in appropriate systems and procedures.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

It is **essential** that the post holder has:

- Specialist knowledge and awareness of services provided, and issues faced by the FOS customer base and FOS Team
- Specialist knowledge of systems used on FOS such as E5 Financial System, ContrOCC, Caspar, LAS, Synergy
- Demonstrable ability to carry out tasks accurately to specified deadlines, producing information in a clear format and suitable for its audience
- Demonstrable ability to work on own initiative, make decisions to manage own workload, achieve deadlines and meet customer requirements
- Ability to demonstrate a high level of I.T skills, (e.g. Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, financial systems, etc.)
- Effective communication skills, both written and oral, with the ability to deal with a breadth of confidential information including vulnerable customers and people from all professional disciplines and Officers from all levels of the organisations
- Demonstrable ability to provide an innovative approach to problem solving.

It is **desirable** that the post holder has:

- Considerable experience in service improvement.

QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT:

It is **essential** that the post holder has:

- A good standard of education including a level 5 qualification or equivalent compensatory experience

It is **desirable** that the post holder:

- Is working towards an accreditation in a relevant field where appropriate (e.g. Association of Public Appointees and Deputies APAD).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It is **essential** that the post holder has:

- A commitment to providing a high standard of customer service
- The ability to maintain confidentiality as appropriate
- Commitment to on-going personal and professional development
- Willingness and ability to be flexible in hours worked and to accommodate peaks in workload
- A commitment to equal opportunities and anti-oppressive strategies in employment and service delivery.
- You may be required to undergo a Basic DBS check to carry out certain tasks within the role

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