

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Schools Financial Advisor
Directorate: Finance & Resources
Service: Finance
Reports to: Group Accountant (Schools Traded)
Grade: SO1/SO2

Job Purpose

The post is located in the Children's, Education and Families (CEF) Finance Team. The CEF Finance Team is the business partner to the CEF Management Team and is responsible for:

- Advice and support on finance and performance to budget holders, budget reviewers and senior managers and schools.
- Developing use of finance and performance indicators
- Promoting high standards of financial management
- Improving efficiency

The Financial Advisor on the Schools Traded Team reports to the Group Accountant (Schools Traded).

This role is to support and advise school Governors, Heads, Bursars and finance staff on all aspects of financial management. This will cover both strategic and operational management and include financial training. The post holder will have a named patch of schools, which can be drawn from all phases (Nursery, Primary and Special).

In addition, the post holder will support the corporate role of the Local Authority in relation to school finance, ensuring that audit and corporate requirements set by the Local Authority are adhered to.

This is a high-profile role that calls for strong technical accounting and communication skills.

Principal Accountabilities

1. Strategic Financial Advice & Support (50%)
 - Support schools to plan both short-term and long-term to maximise use of funding available.
 - Support each school to prioritise the allocation of resources as specified within their School Improvement Plan.
 - Support schools to strategically plan the application of any balances within the overall priorities of the School improvement Plan.
 - Work with schools to model the impact of different scenarios on the funding available.
 - Ensure schools are aware of and understand the risks involved with each budget allocation and the cumulative risk for the bottom line budget.
 - Encourage schools to develop contingency plans for different budget scenarios.
 - Challenge schools to forecast finances across several years to ensure future changes are phased in a planned and considered manner.
 - Advise and support schools to meet the School Financial Value Standard in schools (SFVS)

2. Operational Financial Advice and Support (30%)

- Support and advise schools on monitoring both revenue and capital budgets.
- Support schools to analyse and interpret the financial information produced on FMS or other local systems.
- Support budget holders through the provision of financial advice, information and support.
- Provide school specific operational interpretation and advice on the detail of the County Council's Financial Regulations.
- Provide a point of contact for financial queries and ensure corporate documentation is updated to address the issue if appropriate.
- Support schools to develop day-to-day systems and processes which meet the requirements of County regulations and good practice.
- Advise schools on the operation of the various county insurance and contingency schemes available.
- Advise schools on the correct accountancy treatment and reporting of the separate revenue and capital streams.
- Liaise with the appropriate County Council service on the schools' behalf with specific queries.

3. Training (10%)

- Support and train budget holders in the Council's financial regulations, standing orders and financial procedures.
- Support and train budget holders in all aspects of the annual financial cycle.

4. Development (5%)

- Contribute to the development of corporate financial systems and processes to schools (such as financial pro-forma's, budgeting toolkit, electronic reporting, funding formula development, etc).
- Work closely with the Schools Corporate team to ensure up to date knowledge and understanding of the guidance and regulations produced.
- Contribute to the development of traded services to schools.
- Contribute the on-going professional development of the Schools Traded Team.
- Support service development to meet the changing needs and demands of the customers.
- Contribute to team planning.

5. Corporate responsibilities (5%)

- Notify the Schools Corporate Team where schools are causing concern
- Make the Local authority aware where schools are breaking financial regulations, standing orders or schemes of delegation.
- Provide a risk assessment of the financial standing of individual schools.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

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Education, Qualifications & Training

Essential

- Working towards AAT, equivalent qualification or extensive relevant experience.
- Evidence of commitment to ongoing personal and professional development
- Good 'A' Level education desirable

Desirable

- AAT qualified or equivalent qualification

Knowledge & Experience

Essential

- Significant experience of the annual financial cycle
- Detailed experience of working with non-financial budget holders.
- Extensive knowledge & understanding of maintaining good working relationships in the delivery of financial advice services.

Desirable

- Familiarity with delivering financial training to non-financial managers
- Experience of working in the public sector
- Experience of the operational workings of schools.

Financial Skills

Essential

- Extensive technical knowledge of financial practices and work, including preparation of budgets and final accounts
- Ability to analyse complex financial issues and offer sound, reliable and professional advice
- Ability to collate and present financial information
- Ability to investigate errors in financial information

IT Skills

Essential

- Fully competent in desktop applications (spreadsheet and word processing)
- Extensive knowledge of operating computer accounting systems

Communication Skills

Essential

- Ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing
- Ability to communicate complex financial issues to people who are not financial specialists.
- Ability to confidently explain your viewpoint when others may disagree.
- Ability to constructively challenge whilst understanding the other person's viewpoint.

Other Skills

Essential

- Professional integrity: The strength of character to explain a professional point while having empathy with a customer
- Relations with others: The personal qualities and skills that promote open and constructive relations with colleagues and customers
- Flexibility: The flexibility for and commitment to continual service development and improvement

Special Requirements

Essential

- Ability to travel to all areas of the County
- Ability to attend evening meetings when necessary
- Access to car and current driving licence