



Appointment of Chief Financial Officer

Candidate information

May 2023

Introduction from our CEO

The lives of children and young people worldwide are inextricably linked to the amount and quality of education they receive. At the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) our mission is to improve outcomes for future generations everywhere and to support positive change across education systems.

We do this by creating and sharing robust research evidence and insights on education policy and practice, informing policymakers and other key decision makers on the issues that matter in education and strengthening practice in the classroom.

NFER is the UK's leading independent provider of education research and analysis. We are a not-for-profit organisation with an income of £21 million pa and over 250 staff. Our expertise, long history, vast experience and pioneering methods have established our reputation as an authoritative, trusted and respected voice in education.

Our research, assessments and other services are widely known, highly respected and used by key decision makers in the UK and internationally. Helping to improve the lives of children and young people is at the heart of everything we do.

We are seeking to appoint an experienced Chief Financial Officer who can contribute to our strategy, guide our commercial decisions, draw out key insights from complex financial data and enable us to manage risk effectively.

As part of NFER's Senior Management Team (SMT), you will be a collaborative leader with excellent communication and influencing skills and inspired by our mission. Along with your proven track record of applying financial and commercial expertise, you will be a team player who is passionate about our purpose and what we are working to achieve. You will be able to build strong collaborative relationships across the foundation and the wider sector.

If you feel motivated by the opportunity to help develop and grow NFER and increase our impact on outcomes for children and young people, we would love to hear from you.

Best wishes,

Carole Willis,
CEO, NFER



About Us

NFER is a company limited by guarantee, and a registered charity. We have over 250 staff across two sites (Slough and York), and work with an additional 1,000 associates and temporary staff on individual projects in the UK and internationally. We have Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), reflecting the quality and rigour of our research.

Our work supports effective policy and practice in education. Through our extensive knowledge and expertise, we offer a unique perspective and provide insights which are relevant and accessible. Our clients include government departments and agencies at international, national and local levels, which benefit from NFER's full range of expertise and professional services.

We undertake research on all aspects of education from early years to further and higher education. Our focus at present is on 8 key topics: accountability, assessment, classroom practice, education to employment, social mobility, school funding, school workforce and systems and structures.

We share the results of our work with a wide range of organisations and individuals, including education policymakers and professionals. We use our expertise to identify and develop practical solutions to bring about improvements for children and young people, often working in collaboration with partners.



As a not-for-profit organisation, we reinvest any surplus funds into self-funded research and development to further contribute to the science and knowledge of education research.

We strongly believe that changes to education should be informed by evidence, and the impacts evaluated so that policymakers, leaders and practitioners can see whether their actions are really making a difference. We work with those who are genuinely interested in improving education, from major employers to government departments, from school leaders and teachers to parents.

Our objectives

Our mission is to generate evidence and insights that can be used to improve outcomes for future generations everywhere and to support positive change across education systems.

We aim to be influential in driving education policy and practice; providing new and creative insights based on robust evidence, and constantly looking outwards to build relationships and ensure our insights are used by decision makers.

We have recently developed a new five year strategy, to increase our reach, impact and long-term sustainability. Underpinning our strategy are five VITAL objectives:

- **VISIBLE** - Making NFER more visible and impactful, increasing the visibility, reach and use of our research and expertise, leading to stronger education systems and new opportunities.
- **INTERNATIONAL** - Expanding our global reach, using the depth and breadth of our education and methodological expertise to improve education around the world, diversifying our client base and increasing our resilience.
- **TRANSFORMED** - Transforming NFER into a digital organisation, strengthening our capabilities in e-assessment and evolving our technology and processes to increase quality, security, and competitiveness.
- **ALIGNED** – To have a high performing, skilled, flexible, happy, engaged and unified team.
- **LEADING** – To have leading experts, a leading integrated offer, and a sustainable business, strengthening our research and assessment offer, making effective use of data to deliver education insights and increasing our visibility and influence through our topic strategies.

“Proud that Slough has the national headquarters of NFER – the UK’s largest independent provider of educational research.

Fascinating to hear their research into the pandemic’s impact on school, children’s services, home learning effectiveness, teacher recruitment and training trends.”

Tan Dhesi MP



Research and assessment

Our stakeholder survey shows that NFER is widely known for our research and assessment work, and has a reputation for being professional, authoritative, trusted and rigorous.

We deliver high quality independent research and assessments to a wide range of clients, generating valuable insights and producing tailored outputs to inform policy and practice. Much of our work is won through competitive processes, but we also invest in a number of our own research projects, sometimes working with partners, where there are important and unmet research needs.

Our evidence is frequently cited in government reports, academic journals and the wider media, and successive governments have used it to inform policy thinking. Our team of qualified professional researchers, economists, statisticians, psychometricians, assessment experts and information specialists offer extensive experience in a wide range of research methodologies, combined with deep subject knowledge.

Our products and services

Schools are key partners in much of our work and we identify ways in which NFER’s expertise and evidence can help schools to improve teaching, learning and assessment through a range of products and services. NFER’s research and psychometrics expertise inform the design and development of our products and services. While some of these are freely available through our website and other channels, we are also investing to grow our portfolio of chargeable products and services.

International

We provide insights that support the development of education systems worldwide, through research, evaluation, assessments and the delivery of large-scale comparative studies.

We have a strong and growing team of international education specialists who have successfully designed and delivered projects in a range of countries in East Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and Australia. These projects provide policymakers and practitioners with independent, high-quality research and insights, which are context specific and address their priorities.

Governance and management

NFER is governed by a Board of Trustees chaired by Lorna Cocking. The full list of NFER's current Trustees can be found [here](#). Day to day management is delegated to the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team.

The Senior Management Team is composed of the following individuals:

- Carole Willis – Chief Executive
- Richard Birkett – Commercial Director (due to retire in Autumn 2023)
- Lesley Duff – Director of Research
- Maddie Wheeler – Director of Communications
- Greg Woodcock – Director of Operations
- Alan Read – Chief Digital Officer

A copy of the **NFER organisation chart** can be found [here](#).



About the Team

The Chief Financial Officer will lead and manage our finance, compliance, contracts and facilities teams. These teams have a range of responsibilities, providing expertise, essential business services and support across the foundation.

Finance

The team are responsible for a range of financial management activities, including budget preparation, reporting financial performance, leading on quarterly project reviews, as well as statutory reporting and liaising with auditors on the annual accounts. In addition, the team run the staff and temporary staff payroll, manage our tax liabilities and quarterly VAT returns. They undertake the management of suppliers, which includes the purchase ledger, invoices, credit control and cash flow. They also support with the costing and pricing of project bids and undertake maintenance and development of our ERP system - Unit 4.

Compliance

Our Compliance Officer takes responsibility for NFER's ISO27001 accreditation and the management of the audit process as part of this. They also manage and monitor the corporate risk register with the support of the Director. As the subject matter expert for GDPR they undertake the management of data security, advising on issues, providing training and support with supplier management.

Contracts

Our contracts team review and negotiate on all client and key supplier contracts, as well as assisting with contract disputes as required. In addition, the team monitor and maintain all company insurances.

Facilities

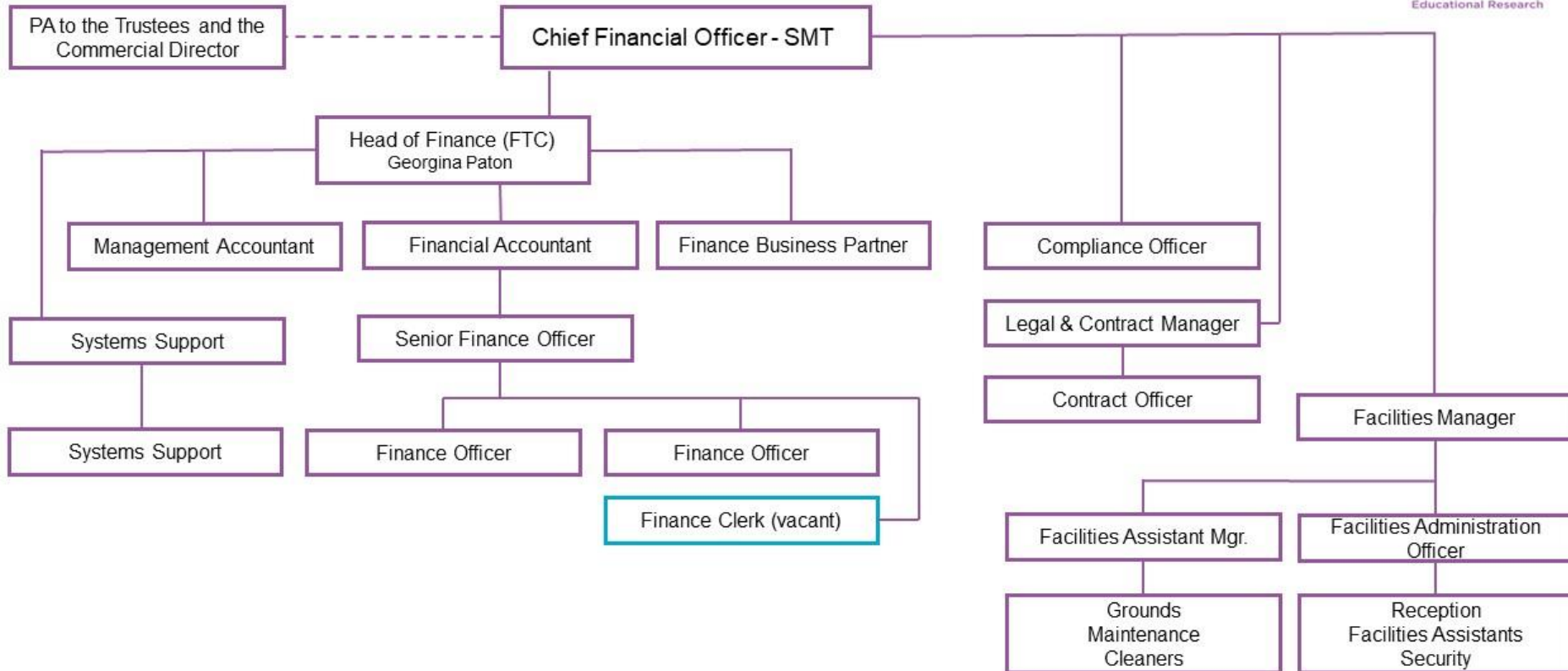
The facilities team manage both the Slough and York offices, ensuring that the buildings and the facilities within them meet the needs of the business and staff. This includes responsibility for health and safety and the environment, management of the grounds and office space, building security and maintenance. The team also lead on our carbon reduction strategy and support with the development of our hybrid working space.

PA

The PA provides valuable support to the Director and the board of trustees. They also have responsibility for the filing of NFER's corporate records and reporting to Companies House and the Charity Commission.

Following the retirement of the Commercial Director later this year, we have reviewed the responsibilities for this key role and updated the job title.

Organisational Chart



Last updated May 2023

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 Restricted

The role of CFO

NFER has grown significantly over the last few years, enabling us to increase the evidence and insights we provide to key decision makers and improve education and outcomes for children and young people. The size and complexity of our projects have also increased, creating the need for better management information, more financial support in developing bids and managing projects, and more commercial expertise in building new partnerships.

We are seeking an experienced Chief Financial Officer who can work closely with the Chief Executive and contribute to the development and delivery of our strategy, guide our commercial decisions, draw out key insights from complex financial data and enable us to manage risk effectively. You will report directly to the Chief Executive.

As part of NFER's Senior Management Team (SMT), you will be a collaborative leader with excellent communication and influencing skills and inspired by NFER's mission.

Key responsibilities:

Financial leadership and strategy

- Develop a strong understanding of our business model, markets and strategic objectives, helping us to balance non-financial and financial objectives in a sustainable way.
- Analyse and interpret financial data and wider business intelligence, drawing out key insights to inform strategic planning and decision making.
- Protect the financial stability of the organisation, working with other Directors.
- Ensure regular reports on our financial performance are available, along with projections of future income and margins, highlighting any risks and opportunities.
- Identify ways to improve our financial operating model and processes that support integrated cross-team working and effective budget planning and management.
- Work with the SMT and the Head of Finance to produce the annual business plan and budget, securing sign-off from the Trustees.
- Support the Trustee Investment Committee in providing careful oversight of our Investment Managers and investment portfolio.
- Ensure financial management information is accurate, timely, relevant and accessible; that it meets the needs of our managers; complements our Bid Monitoring analysis; and actively informs decision making across the organisation.
- Support the finance team to successfully deliver key finance activities, including statutory reporting and audit requirements, careful oversight of our cash flow position, maintaining relationships with key suppliers (banks, auditors and tax advisors), implementing the payroll and maintaining key relationships.



Commercial leadership and risk management

- Support – and where appropriate lead – commercial negotiations on key contract terms, pricing strategies and partnership arrangements.
- Oversee the work of the Contracts team, protecting NFER’s commercial interests and intellectual property, and managing any contractual risks.
- Develop and implement a proportionate approach to due diligence on clients, partners and subcontractors, taking account of data security, safeguarding, NFER’s reputation and other relevant factors.
- Act as the Head of Data Security, ensuring that NFER has a strong focus on information security and retains certification to ISO27001.
- Take responsibility for NFER’s risk register, ensuring that key risks are identified and regularly reviewed and that appropriate mitigations are put in place.

Corporate Governance

- Act as NFER’s Company Secretary, building good relationships with Trustees and supporting them to provide effective governance of the charity.
- Ensure NFER complies with all legal and regulatory requirements and Charity Commission guidance, procuring external legal advice when appropriate.

Facilities

- Chair our Safety, Health and Environment Committee and ensure all legal requirements related to health and safety are adhered to.
- Oversee our Facilities team in their work to provide attractive, flexible and well-maintained office environments that support cross-team and hybrid working, maximise productivity and evolve over time.
- Work with the Head of Facilities to explore cost-effective options for NFER's carbon reduction plan.

Providing leadership to your staff

- Provide strong and supportive leadership to your teams, coaching them to successfully deliver their objectives and support NFER's mission.
- Create opportunities for their learning and development, embedding a culture of continuous improvement.
- Champion cross-team working and effective collaboration and communication.
- Foster a culture of business partnering amongst your teams, encouraging them to deliver an excellent service that supports the needs of the wider organisation.
- Promote a working environment that aligns with NFER's values and respects equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Help make NFER a great place to work, with committed and motivated staff, all working together to improve education for children and young people.



Person specification

We are looking for a team player who is passionate about NFER's purpose and what we are working to achieve. You will be able to build strong collaborative relationships across and outside the organisation and will have a proven track record of applying financial and commercial expertise.

The successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate evidence of the following experience and skills:

Essential

- A respected finance leader with a proven ability to make a substantive contribution to the financial success of the organisation.
- Qualified accountant (ACA, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA or equivalent qualification).
- Experience of operating successfully in a senior management position, ideally in both the not-for-profit and commercial sectors.
- A track record of providing sound commercial advice and negotiation skills.
- Strong leadership skills and the ability to think strategically, outline a vision and get buy-in from stakeholders.
- A successful track record of motivating and managing staff.
- A proven ability to navigate complex financial data, provide relevant analysis, and use it to influence decision-making.
- Evidence of problem-solving skills and the ability to exercise initiative and show sound judgement.

Desirable

- Knowledge of risk management practices, information security and charity law.
- Experience of working in an international context, including with multicurrency and international tax arrangements.

Personal qualities

- Collegiate and empathetic team player.
- A calm authority, and a level-headed, approachable leader.
- An enabler, focussed on problem solving through collaboration and creativity.
- A deep sense of personal integrity.
- Highly motivated and results orientated, with a commitment to providing high quality customer service.
- An enthusiastic, flexible and proactive approach to work.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills at all levels.

Terms of Appointment

NFER is offering a competitive salary to be confirmed with the preferred candidate.

Package benefits include:

- Employer pension contributions of 10% of basic salary; with employee pension contribution a minimum of 5%
- 30 days' annual leave plus bank holidays, and up to 4 additional discretionary days offered at the CEO's discretion
- Employee assistance and wellbeing programmes
- Life assurance scheme
- Travel season ticket loan
- Free parking
- Eye care vouchers

This is a hybrid working role, based out of NFER's head office in Slough. It is envisioned that the CFO will spend around 1-2 days a week in the office as a visible and present member of the Senior Management Team.

How to Apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to NFER on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code YBJAA. Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter.

Candidates should submit a CV and cover letter addressed to the CEO, Carole Willis. The letter should outline your motivations for wanting to join NFER and be no more than two pages.

The closing date for applications is **noon on Thursday 15th June 2023**.

Next steps: Longlisted candidates will be interviewed by Saxton Bampfylde between 30 June and 14th July. The shortlist will be selected on 25th July, and interviews with NFER will take place during the week of 31st July.

NFER places equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of our business, seeking to promote fair employment procedures and practices to ensure equal opportunities for all.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.



National Foundation for
Educational Research



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