

Headlines



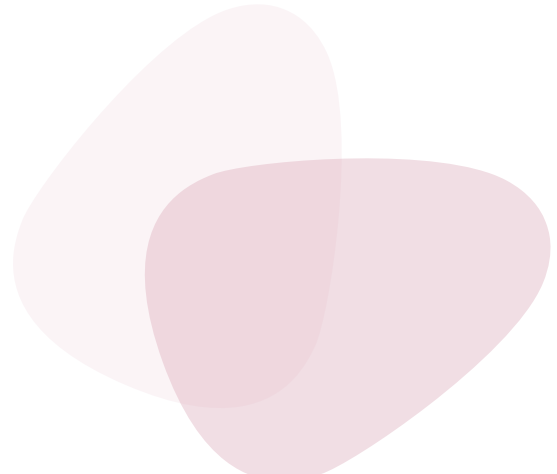
Supporting you to be **innovative, creative** and **inspired!**





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New financial wellbeing benefits - Salary Finance

With the continued pressures around the current cost of living squeeze, money is on many people's minds right now, and having access to benefits and support that could make a real difference has never been more important. To support our colleagues' financial and mental wellbeing, we have launched a new employee benefit called Salary Finance. Use the QR Code opposite to find out more:



We're pleased to announce that starting from November, Salary Finance will also be available to Oxfordshire County Council's school staff (NB: this benefit is only available to the schools that use IBC for payroll purposes). This includes:

- **Affordable loans repaid through salary:** which could be used to pay off expensive debts and avoid payday loans or credit cards - Representative Rate 9.9% APR (fixed).
- **Advance earned pay:** the ability to access some of your earned pay ahead of your regular payday. Make payday when you need it and avoid relying on overdrafts and credit cards.
- **Simple savings:** savings account with contributions transferred directly from your salary, helping you to save without the hassle.
- **Help to Save:** with this government-backed scheme, anyone receiving Working Tax Credit, Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit could earn bonus payments on their savings. Earn up to 50p for every £1 saved.
- **Money insights:** a range of tips and videos as well as tools for budgeting and saving to help make money simple.

To find more about the financial support available to you via Salary Finance, visit: occ.salaryfinance.com. To log in, you'll simply need your name, date of birth and national insurance number.

Important: The "Advance" product is not a regulated lending product. This is an option, not a recommendation. Oxfordshire County Council does not benefit from offering this service and all your communications will be with Salary Finance. Loan applications will be assessed to ensure the loan is appropriate and affordable for you. "Learn" content is for guidance and educational purposes only and is generic in nature. Salary Finance does not offer regulated financial advice. Please seek independent financial advice. 🍀

The graphic features a yellow background with the 'Salary Finance' logo at the top. Below the logo, the text 'Affordable loans', 'Advance earned pay', 'Simple savings', and 'Financial education' is listed. In the center is an illustration of a car with a driver, a passenger, and a dog. At the bottom, there is promotional text, a QR code, and a 'SCAN ME' label.

Salary Finance

Affordable loans
Advance earned pay
Simple savings
Financial education

With higher acceptance rates and lower interest rates than traditional lenders, Salary Finance may be able to help you pay less for your debt and start saving hassle-free.

Salary Finance provides access to affordable loans repaid through salary, advances on earned pay, simple savings accounts and financial education that could help you take control of your money.

To find out more and apply, visit:
occ.salaryfinance.com

Loan Product:
Representative Rate
13.9% APR (fixed).



SCAN ME

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Employment legislation Update

The Workers (Predictable Terms and Conditions) Act 2023, gives workers and agency workers, the statutory right to request a predictable work pattern. This can relate to hours of work, days of work, or the length of contract/period of engagement. The right will apply to;

- Workers whose existing working patterns lack certainty
- Workers on fixed term contracts of 12 months or less (who could request an extension to their contract)
- Agency workers (who can make their request either to the agency or to the hirer, providing they meet certain criteria)

There will be a qualifying period of service, currently anticipated to be 26 weeks, however these weeks do not have to be continuous. The employer must respond to this request in line with the provisions of the Act, but there is no duty to accept the request and the worker can make no more than two requests within a 12-month period. ACAS will producing a Code of Practice for consultation in the Autumn. Commencement is expected in September 2024. Further advice to schools will be provided later in the year to enable schools to meet their obligation, assuming that commencement is as expected.

The Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) Act 2023 amends the auto-enrolment criteria for pension purposes. The Council/Academies must already automatically enrol employees and workers into a pension scheme, providing they meet age and earnings requirements. In reality, the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and the Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS) provide for enrolment regardless of the minimums prescribed by law.

However, there are employees and workers that opt out of the pension schemes, and existing regulations require employers to 'auto re-enrol' these employees into a scheme every three years, if they meet the statutory minimum age and earnings criteria.

The Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) Act 2023 will mean that a greater number of employees are auto re-enrolled every three years as the minimum age will be reduced from 22 years to 18 years, and the earnings threshold also reduced, which is currently £10,000 per year. The Act is subject to consultation about how and when it will be implemented and therefore is subject to commencement regulations.

The Employment (Allocation of Tips) Act 2023 is not anticipated to have a large impact in the Local Authority, however if any schools provide services which result in tips for their staff, this Act will apply when commenced. The purpose of this Act is to ensure fair allocation of tips to workers where tips are received.

Finally.....EPS are closely monitoring two Bills progressing through parliament; the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act) 2010 Bill, and the Paternity (Leave and Pay) Bill. The Worker Protection Bill seeks to introduce an employer duty to prevent sexual harassment. The Paternity (Leave and Pay) Bill seeks to introduce greater flexibility for fathers-to-be to take their paternity leave in two separate blocks (it must be one block currently), but also to require them to provide 28 days' notice of such leave. 🌸

HR policies – responsibility to make them available to all staff

These procedures are the minimum procedures that should be made available to staff

- Absence Policy (not statutory but strongly recommended)
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Performance Management Policy
- Capability Procedure
- Resolving Workplace Issues Policy (new from September, replacing the Grievance Procedure)
- School ICT Policy (not statutory but strongly recommended)
- School Code of Conduct (not statutory but strongly recommended)
- Procedure for Protected Disclosures (Whistleblowing)
- Pay Policy

Schools can make these available through a number of ways;

- Placing copies on an intranet with care to ensure they are updated when there are updates on the OCC Web pages for HR Policies for Schools
- Ensuring there is a clear route to ask for copies if needed (bearing in mind that this may prevent some staff from asking for them, due to the sensitive nature of some topics)
- Providing a paper copy folder in the staff room again, with care to ensure they are updated when there are updates Schools web pages 🌸



Recruitment – Continuing Challenges

We know that schools continue to find it incredibly difficult to recruit to both teaching and support vacancies and there are many schools that have undertaken more than one round of advertising to still receive no applications for their roles.

The recent teacher labour market survey found that recruitment and retention challenges in England have significantly intensified since the pandemic. Falling retention rates and low ITT figures point to a deteriorating competitiveness of teaching compared to other occupations in relation to pay and working conditions.

For support roles we know there is increased competition with other employers across the County who may be able to offer more flexibility or higher rates of pay along with the impact of the cost of living where individuals are seeking more hours of work than schools are able to offer or wanting to work across 52 weeks of the year rather than term time.

While this may not always find you a suitable applicant for your specific role we know that visits to Education Jobs remain high and promotion of the site continues to attract many visitors who hopefully will go on to apply for school roles.

What can schools do locally?

- ✓ Promote vacancies via school newsletters, local newspapers/parish magazines;
- ✓ Ensure any vacancies are clearly displayed on the school website and can be found easily
- ✓ Promote vacancies on school social media site, e.g. facebook and promote in local groups
- ✓ Advertise on local noticeboards for lunchtime staff, caretaking roles
- ✓ Use of banners on the outside of school site to encourage individuals to access Education Jobs website
- ✓ Encourage governors, parents and carers to share details of vacancies with their networks.

You could seek volunteers from your school who could talk to camera about their role or who would be prepared to write a pen portrait about their role that you could use in your recruitment campaign. This type of resource adds real value to the campaign as potential applicants can hear from those who work directly in roles and who may want to find out more. 🌸



The Eps Customer Contact Model

We launched our new Customer Contact Model in December 2022.

By managing queries and cases more effectively, and through the right channel, we can improve the quality and speed of our response and the service we provide to schools.

Overall, we have seen a positive response from all our customers which helps us to better manage the increasing volume of queries coming into the Helpdesk and provide improved advice and support.

Building on this success, we've also been listening to your feedback and have made some changes to improve the contact model further. This includes a more streamlined online query contact.

We would like to remind you to use the correct contact method to contact us for which the full details can be found on the [Education Personnel Services \(EPS\) | Schools \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\) page](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/education-personnel-services-eps/schools).



ONLINE QUERY FORM – for more complex issues and / or those about a specific situation or individual

The **form is designed to elicit the relevant enquiry information** at the outset, via focused questions which help us to provide a high-quality service.

We are delighted that the majority of you are now using the form and this is enabling us to triage queries more effectively and respond by the most appropriate/efficient channel; call, email or asking you to arrange a booked appointment at a time convenient for you. We have also taken on your feedback and have reviewed the number of questions asked and the length of the form to make it even easier and more user friendly to use.

If you are not already using the form, we would politely ask that you start as this will help you to ensure we have all the key information required to assist in answering your query. We have also begun to review the use of the email channel, with a view that emails will be phased out by the end of the Academic Year. If you do use email to contact the Helpdesk, your query will be still answered but the expectation will be on your next interaction with the Helpdesk that you use the most appropriate channel (Online Form) to contact us. If you do use the email function to contact us, you will also be sent a reminder to use the form on your next interaction with the Helpdesk.

The **link to the Query Form is available via the contact ‘Education Personnel Services (EPS)’ page** on OCC’s InSite. You can save the link as a favourite on your web browser enabling quick access without having to log in each time.



TELEPHONE – Critical or Complex issues

Exceptionally for those issues which are **‘Critical or Complex’ and require immediate in the moment support (see definition below) you can call us direct on 02380 383500**, and speak to an Adviser during our business hours or receive a call back; if your enquiry meets the definition, an Adviser will call you back as a priority within 4 working hours. **The definition of Critical or Complex is:**



- in order **to take immediate action** to **safeguard a member(s)** of the school community such as situations where the **health, safety, welfare**, of an individual or individuals (staff, pupils, or wider members of the school community) may be **at risk**.
- in a complicated or **multifaceted situation** where **immediate action** is needed and that **action may have serious consequences** depending on the action taken or not taken. This might include **significant implications** for the **reputation** of the School, **relationships** within the school community or the strategy for managing the arising case.

To ensure that those customers who really need ‘in the moment’ advice are able to speak with one of our Advisers at the earliest opportunity, please only call the Telephone Line if the above definition is met.

Should it be deemed that your call does not meet the definition of “Critical or Complex”, you may be asked to submit a form as above, so that we can ensure that customers who need “in the moment” advice, can be supported as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Please take the opportunity, if you have not already done so, to review the new ways of contacting us, a summary of which is on the schools Insite page <https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/education-personnel-services-eps>; as are details of our business hours, where to go for transactional or payroll processing issues, and a link to our privacy notice.

In line with our customer charter, we are committed to seeking your feedback and further suggestions for improvement and will continue to monitor the contact model and its effectiveness. However, we can only do this with your help. Following the resolution of each query, you will automatically receive a customer feedback form. We really value your feedback and we review it frequently and follow up on any concerns, therefore we would be grateful if you can complete the form each time.

We look forward to engaging with and supporting you further. 🌸