



Royal Life Saving Society UK Director of Finance and Operations

Candidate pack
February 2026



ROYAL
LIFE SAVING
SOCIETY UK

charisma
CHARITY RECRUITMENT

Enjoy Water **Safely**



CONTENTS

Section one - Introduction

- Welcome from the CEO

Section two - About us

- Royal Life Saving Society UK
- Strategic Framework 2025-2030
- Our values
- RLSS UK Enterprise
- Corporate Services Directorate
- RLSS UK governance and compliance

Section three - Job description

- Role details
- Role purpose

Section four - Person specification

- Person specification

Section five - How to apply

- How to apply

1

Welcome

I am delighted that you are considering applying for the dynamic role of Director of Finance and Operations at the Royal Lifesaving Society UK (RLSS UK).

RLSS UK is the national charity supporting communities of all backgrounds to enjoy water safely and be free from drowning.

We have a proud history of helping to reduce the number of lives lost to drowning. Our Impact Report 2024 details the fantastic work undertaken last year and is a testament to the commitment of our volunteers, staff, trustees, and members who advocate for and promote water safety in our communities. Please do take the time to read this - [RLSS UK Charity Impact Report 2024](#)

Following years of collaborative campaigning for change, the Department of Education announced in July 2025 that statutory guidance will introduce the Water Safety Code in schools. The statutory inclusion of this vital education marks a key step towards equipping young individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to stay safe in and near water. Read more [here](#)

RLSS UK also has a thriving Commercial Directorate, which is recognised as a leader in our field. Last year alone, we awarded a record breaking 127,685 lifesaving qualifications and 49,887 Rookie Lifeguard awards, presented in communities throughout the UK and Ireland, and reflecting the commitment of our lifesaving instructors in developing the next generation of lifesavers.



We launched our strategic framework in June last year and consequently it is an exciting time to join the Society as we look to build on our work to save more lives together.

This is a pivotal role for our future, and we want an inspirational, committed and collaborative Director of Finance and Operations to lead our Corporate Services Directorate, who builds effective working relationships, embraces change and opportunity, is driven by data and insight with the ability to translate this into success for the charity. Importantly you will be a motivational leader with experience of working in a multi-disciplinary team to deliver outcomes and impact.

I hope this candidate pack provides you with a useful insight into our wonderful organisation and the requirements for this position. If you feel this role is right for you, I look forward to receiving your application.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Simmy".

Simmy Akhtar
Chief Executive Officer

2

About us



charisma
CHARITY RECRUITMENT

2

About Us

Royal Life Saving Society UK

Our roots were established in 1891 as the Life Saving Society, and, in the early 1900s, with support from the Royal Family, we were granted permission to adopt the 'Royal' to our title – a honour that we are immensely proud of. Today, the charity and trading companies currently turnover more than £6 million with circa 80 staff. The majority of our income is currently generated from our commercial activities, however, in 2025, we were pleased to welcome our first Director of Income Generation and Engagement.

We have used our extensive, world-leading knowledge of water safety and training to develop a comprehensive range of [award-winning](#) vocational qualifications, awards and educational programmes and campaigns, which have the ultimate aim of preventing drowning and stopping unnecessary loss of life. Our portfolio includes the [National Pool Lifeguard Qualification \(NPLQ\)](#) - the premier lifeguard training programme.

Strategic Framework 2025-2030

We have recently launched our new Strategic Framework for 2025-2030, with the ambition to save lives by leading in lifesaving, lifeguarding, and water safety education to prevent drownings. We launched our new strategy during our flagship campaign, Drowning Prevention Week, and premiered it in Westminster to MPs and key partners.

This new strategy marks a new era for RLSS UK, and a key aspect of the strategy is an update to the charity's strapline, 'Enjoy Water Safely', with the addition of 'Free from Drowning' emphasising the charity's purpose, mission, and vision together, with the overall aim of saving more lives.

Our work will focus on three key pillars: Engagement, Education, and Expertise. These pillars aim to prevent drownings and enable everyone to enjoy water safely. There will also be a strong emphasis on culture and collaboration to ensure everyone can access water safety education, regardless of their background.

Our strategic framework can be viewed [here](#)

2

About Us



Our values

One Team

We are respectful, kind, and work collectively towards our common goal. We support one another, celebrate our successes, and create a motivating environment

Ambitious

We are passionate and self-motivated about our lifesaving cause. We learn, share and help one another to grow, with integrity at the heart of all that we do

Credible

We are trusted as the leading experts in water safety, drowning prevention, and education

Collaborative

We work collaboratively both internally and externally to pool our skills and resources to achieve our goals and make a greater impact

Innovative

We are committed to continuous improvement by being creative, seeking new ideas, new solutions and embracing change

Responsible

We are committed to collective ownership for our charity, our environment, and hold ourselves to account

2

About Us

RLSS UK Enterprise Limited, t/a RLSS UK Shop

Our trading outfit, RLSS UK Shop, stocks and fulfils a range of products to help support the delivery of our vocational and non-vocational awards and qualifications. The suppliers we use are carefully selected and vetted by experts for their safety and durability. We will continue to ensure we concentrate our efforts on making sure we provide our lifesaving community with the best service and materials to perform activities safely and to the best of their ability.

Our current commercial offering is based on the delivery of the highest quality of OFQUAL, CCEA and Qualifications Wales regulated and non-regulated vocational training programmes, tailored to our customers' needs – whether that is within the aquatic environment or beyond. The approach we take is innovative and robust, ensuring we provide excellent training programmes, support materials for the delivery of our courses and ongoing training and development to ensure the highest standards across our range of lifeguarding, lifesaving, first aid and consultancy services.

Corporate Services Directorate

The Corporate Services Directorate will be the Director of Finance and Operations key area of responsibility and accountability. You will have four direct reports who lead the following departments:

- Finance
- IT and Business Systems
- HR
- Compliance

2

About Us

RLSS UK governance and compliance

The Royal Life Saving Society UK is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Our Board of Trustees, who are also registered as directors at Companies House, ensure the sound governance of RLSS UK.

Our Board comprises:

- President - elected by RLSS UK membership
- Deputy President - elected by RLSS UK membership
- Treasurer - ex officio
- Up to six Trustees elected by RLSS UK membership
- Three appointed Trustees

Our current Regulatory bodies are:

- The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation, Ofqual in England.
- The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment, CCEA in Northern Ireland.
- Qualifications Wales, QW in Wales.

Maintaining and exceeding the standards, policies and procedures of these bodies are essential for ensuring our Awarding Organisation and Awarding Body status with the respective Regulators, enabling us to offer regulated qualifications. Compliance sits in our Corporate Services Directorate. We also maintain compliance with the Charity Commission, Companies House and the Fundraising Regulator.

3

Job description



charisma
CHARITY RECRUITMENT

3

Job description



Role details

Role title:	Director of Finance and Operations
Reports to:	Chief Executive Officer
Responsible for:	Senior Head of Finance, HR Manager, Head of IT and Business Systems, and the Compliance team (4 direct reports)
Salary:	£78,000 – £83,000, including £8,000 car allowance
Contract:	Permanent
Hours:	0.8 - 1 FTE
Location:	Worcester Headquarters / Hybrid 2-3 days in the office per week (3 days at the start). Travel in relation to the responsibilities set out in the role will be required when necessary. Weekend and evening work may also be necessary.
Annual leave:	27 days, plus bank holidays (pro rata), and a discretionary day off for birthday.
Pension:	Automatic enrolment into a pension scheme on commencement, or the chance to opt-in should you choose.
Benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Car allowance equivalent to £666 per month (£8,000 per annum)• Free RLSS UK Membership• Enhanced Society Sick Pay (following a successful 6-month probation/service)• Employee Assistance Programme• Private Health and Eye Care (following a successful 6-month probation/service)• Life Assurance Scheme• Free on-site car parking while based at our Worcester Head Office• Regular Staff Socials and Events organised by our 'Culture Club' team, including a Christmas Party and Summer Social.

3

Job description



Job purpose

The Director of Finance and Operations is accountable for all financial aspects of the charity and two wholly owned companies, including:

- Primary responsibility for planning, implementing, managing and controlling all financial-related activities, including the development of financial and operational budgets and strategies.
- Setting and management of overall corporate and financial risk strategy for the Society and across its subsidiaries.
- With the CEO, Board and SLT formulating the Society's future direction, including planning and defining of key projects and strategies.
- Act as a key member of the SLT, providing strong and inspirational leadership to RLSS UK.
- Key responsibility for:
 - Leading on the financial health of the Society
 - Legal / Corporate Governance / Corporate Compliance / Corporate & Finance Risk
 - Strategic facilities management, including Health and Safety
 - ICT and Business Systems
 - Contract management
 - Strategic responsibility for HR
 - Strategic responsibility for Compliance

Duties and responsibilities

- Strategically lead and deliver across RLSS UK's Corporate Services Directorate, including all four areas of responsibility (Finance, IT and Business Systems, HR and Compliance).
- Lead, motivate and develop direct reports and the wider Corporate Services Directorate teams.
- Ultimate accountability for preparing the annual financial accounts in accordance with Charity SORP.
- Develop, direct and monitor strategic and annual business plans.
- Lead and oversee the annual budget, risk and performance planning process.
- Develop financial, reserves and investment strategies for the Board of Trustees.
- Oversee all transactions and processing systems.
- Provide strategic recommendations to enhance financial performance and new business opportunities.
- Ensure effective internal risk and management controls are in place and compliance with Charity SORP and applicable regulatory legislation for financial and tax reporting.

3

Job description



- Manage relationships with auditors, professional advisers, and banking institutions.
- Lead contract negotiations and tenders for fulfilment services.
- Analyse the financial climate, market trends, pay and reward data to assist SLT and the Board in creating strategic plans for the future.
- Interpret complex financial information and provide updates and information as needed.
- Monitor cash flow and accounts.
- Supervise financial assistants and other team members in the facilitation of day-to-day operations, including tracking financial data, invoicing, payroll, etc.
- Prepare official company and Board reports.
- Update and implement financial policies and procedures, ensuring they are effectively developed, maintained, and reviewed.
- Ensure and maintain that the Society has a comprehensive financial policy framework for all aspects of the Companies Act to discharge its duties in accordance with relevant laws, statutes and best practices.
- Work closely with the Honorary Treasurer to ensure a robust reporting process of the financial health of the Society.

IT Leadership

- Ensure that recommended IT policies and protocols are put in place, regularly updated and followed accurately.
- Lead the liaison with Business Systems & IT advisors, ensuring robust processes and procedures are in place.
- Ensure that the Society has appropriate processes regarding procurement and management of IT resources and equipment.

Compliance

- Ensure that standards, policies and procedures meet and exceed the regulatory requirements set by our regulatory bodies.

3

Job description



HR and culture

- Ensure effective, legally compliant policies and procedures are in place to support the recruitment, development, and retention of a high performing workforce.
- Support the development and implementation of HR initiatives that build and underpin equality, diversity and inclusion, learning and development, wellbeing and employee engagement.
- Lead on the development and presentation of recommendations for annual pay and benefits review.

Contractual arrangements

- Manage and ensure effective arrangements are in place for:
 - Insurances
 - Pension administration
 - Corporate Risk register
 - Licenses and leases
 - IT and other business systems support contracts
 - Professional services including legal and audit

Overarching director responsibilities

- Undertake other duties from time to time as reasonably required by the Chief Executive.
- This job description is not to be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive. It is intended as an outline indication of areas of activity and responsibility and will be amended in light of the changing needs of the organisation.
- Provide strong leadership and direction, taking responsibility for the planning, development and managerial work of the organisation.
- Deputise for the CEO and other members of the SLT as required.
- Attend Board meetings and the Finance and Operations Committee where required, and any other such Leadership Team functions where necessary.
- Demonstrate and uphold the Society's values and behavioural standards at all times.
- Build effective relations across departments to become the focal point for strategic issues across RLSS UK.

4

Person specification



charisma
CHARITY RECRUITMENT

4

Person spec



Person Specification

Essential

- Qualified accountant (e.g. ACCA, CIMA, ACA), with significant post-qualification experience, including at a senior level.
- Experience in the charity or non-profit sector.
- Experience in reporting at Board level and preparing business cases and proposals for Board review.
- A strong strategic and commercial mindset.
- Demonstrable experience in overseeing compliance, HR and IT strategy and systems development.
- Excellent knowledge of risk monitoring and management techniques, with the ability to advise the Board on balanced risk mitigation strategies.
- Good knowledge of charity law, governance and the latest charity accounting regulations, standards and rules (SORP).
- Experience in negotiating, developing and managing commercial partnership agreements and monitoring the performance of commercial suppliers and partners.
- Excellent project management skills, with the ability to oversee a range of major projects at senior level and on behalf of the Board.
- Strong interpersonal skills, with the ability to communicate and manage well at all levels of the organisation.
- Strong problem-solving skills and ability to make decisions based on accurate and timely analysis.
- High level of integrity and dependability.
- Strong analytical, critical thinking, and multi-tasking skills, with the ability to work to tight deadlines, and pick up new information and apply.

4

Person spec



Desirable strengths sought

- **Leading and developing others** – You take responsibility for influencing and motivating others to contribute to the goals and success of their team and organisation. You promote other people's learning and development to help them achieve their goals and fulfil their potential.
- **Results Focus** – You maintain a strong sense of focus on results, driving tasks and projects to completion.
- **Self-confidence** – You have a strong belief in yourself and your abilities to accomplish tasks and goals.
- **Critical Thinking** – You approach problems and arguments by breaking them down systematically and evaluating them objectively.
- **Flexibility** – You remain adaptable and flexible in the face of unfamiliar or changing situations.
- **Strategic Mindedness** – You focus on the future and take a strategic perspective on issues and challenges.
- **Creativity** – You come up with new ideas and original solutions to move things forward.
- **Empathy** – You readily identify with other people's situations and can see things clearly from their perspective.
- **Optimism** – You remain positive and upbeat about the future and your ability to influence it to your advantage.

Useful experience (but not essential)

- Understanding of / affinity with membership environments and working with a volunteer-based organisation.
- Experience as a Trustee or NED in a national charity or non-profit.
- Experience in or knowledge of the leisure sector.
- Some experience in business development, mergers or acquisitions.
- Track record of successfully managing change initiatives within finance, HR and IT departments.
- Familiarity with project management methodologies and tools.
- Knowledge of data protection and cybersecurity regulations.

5

How to
apply



charisma
CHARITY RECRUITMENT

5

How to apply



Royal Life Saving Society UK is working exclusively with Charisma Charity Recruitment.

Applications should be submitted through the [Charisma website](#) and include:

- A comprehensive CV
- A supporting statement (no more than two pages) summarising why you're applying and how you meet the person specification

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role, please contact:

Katherine Anderson-Scott, Executive Director of Charisma Charity Recruitment on 01962 813300 or email info@charismarecruitment.co.uk.

We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds. We do not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, colour, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, veteran status or other category protected by law.

Closing date: Tuesday 24th March 2026

Interviews with RLSS UK: w/c 13th April onwards

Charisma vetting interviews must be completed by EOD Thursday 2nd April prior to shortlist submission on Friday 3rd April.



charisma
CHARITY RECRUITMENT