



A week in the life of an Office Based Finance Assistant – Laura Tait

Monday 6 July

Monday morning and the start of another working week. But I'm so happy to be actually going to the office, unlike most of my colleagues who are still working from home. At the start of lockdown I too was one of the homeworkers and it didn't take long before I was desperate to return to the office. Even though we are living in a more digital world just now, there are still many paper files I rely on to do my work. So I was delighted when my manager Mandy phoned me to ask whether I could come to the office for a couple of days at the start of June to allow my colleague Kieran (who has been working from the office since lockdown) to take some well earned leave. And when I was back we agreed it made sense to remain working in the office, as the volume of incoming phone calls was increasing and me being there could ease the pressure on Kieran. Plus I live within a short walking distance so there's no travelling issues.

Before heading off to work I take Milo for a quick walk. Milo is my 9 month old border collie, who was certainly getting used to me being around the house more between March and June. So much so that I was worried he might be unsettled when I returned to the office – but he seems to have adjusted well to the change in routine!

In the office, and I get on with the working day. First task is to process the rent payments, whether they are via debit card payments the previous day, or through allpay, direct debits or standing orders. Before I returned to the office, Kieran was helping with this but now I'm back he can concentrate on his own workload. The rest of the day involved emailing back and forward with our external auditors as our annual audit is being carried out this month. Normally they would be in the

office asking to see files etc, but nothing is normal these days. So I'm having to email everything to them which can be time consuming. Our finance consultant Pat would have also been in the office beforehand to help me collate everything into what I call "Pat's folder". I am definitely missing Pat's folder this year!

Before I know it, it's 3pm and Monday is done. Since lockdown our office hours have been reduced to 10am-3pm, with the homeworkers continuing the normal 9-5 hours so tenants can always get in touch.

Before my fiancé Kev gets home from work I take Milo out for a runabout at Drumpellier Country Park. Kev is an Amazon delivery driver, so he has been really busy with all the lockdown spenders!



Tuesday 7 July

After the rent payments are completed this morning, I get to work on processing invoices received. When I joined the Association last year, all our invoices were received in paper form – meaning managers physically signed them off before passing back to me for processing. But after reviewing procedures we managed to change the system so that all invoices are stored onto the computer system and managers can electronically approve them. I am so relieved this now happens, as I cannot begin to imagine how we would have managed otherwise!

Once I've finished the invoices I get the payments scheduled onto our online Bank system and email the Management Team to ask them to authorise.

Phone call from Mandy this afternoon to update me on what's happening with our staff who have been furloughed since April, as I am responsible for making the claims to HMRC. Their furlough ends on Friday, and Mandy tells me that while one of our cleaners Dorothy is remaining on furlough for a further 3 weeks, our Estates Inspector Tom is returning to work next week and the other cleaner (another Dorothy!) will also be returning but only 3 days per week instead of 5. So she is now on this flexible furlough scheme introduced by the government on 1 July. I will need to work out the different calculations for future claims, but I will think about that later as the day is over again.

Wednesday 8 July

After the rent processing this morning, I get to work on reconciling the Association's bank accounts. Because of the work involved in preparing for the audit, I feel I've fallen behind a bit with this so it's good to get myself back up to date.

The morning passes quickly with getting on with the bank reconciliations and helping with the phone calls coming in.

Full staff meeting this afternoon via Zoom. It's good to see everyone again, even if it is just on a screen. Our Estates Officer Gary and myself join the meeting in the Committee Room – which is where we'd normally have the meetings so it is quite appropriate! And plenty of space to allow us to socially distance.

Quite a bit of discussion around possibilities of more staff returning to work and opening office to the public again. But we'll need to wait and see what is announced tomorrow.

Thursday 9 July

After the rents this morning, I process some more invoices received and continue with reconciling the bank accounts.

I keep an eye on my personal email account too, as I'm expecting an email from the holiday company Tui about my holiday booking to the Dominican Republic, originally booked for September. This was to be our honeymoon as Kev and I had planned our wedding for that month.

We could have still gone ahead with the wedding on the original date, but we both felt it probably wouldn't be the wedding we wanted due to reduced numbers and social distancing etc. So we made the decision to postpone it to next year when hopefully the world is back to normal. My hen weekend in Benidorm is also cancelled but Kev's stag weekend is in Amsterdam so he'll probably still be able to get away with his mates.

After work I meet up with my friend Zoe and we go for a walk with our dogs – a socially distanced dog walk of course!

Friday 10 July

Today I get to work on processing the Universal Credit payments. This is a fairly recent addition to my duties as it used to be completed by the housing team. But we decided it made more sense for it be part of the finance role. While I'm not finding any difficulties in doing this, it's good to know I can still phone Heather or Kelly from housing if I have any questions.

Some computer issues this afternoon as the internet seems to be down, meaning our homeworkers can't

get into the system. Maureen, our Systems Support Officer phones Kieran and after talking him through some steps to go through in the server room, we are all back up and running again. The day passes fairly quickly with work and incoming phone calls, including a catch up with my manager. Thinking of taking Milo on a wee roadtrip to Glen Coe tomorrow and walking the Pap of Glencoe – so I hope the weather stays dry for it!