

Social Finance

Chief Operating Officer – IPS Grow

Candidate Pack | March 2026



PART OF



Welcome

Work is one of the most powerful foundations for wellbeing, independence and inclusion. Yet for many people living with severe mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction or other healthcare needs, the opportunity to find and sustain meaningful employment remains out of reach. *Individual Placement and Support (IPS)* is helping to change that.

IPS is an evidence-based approach that supports people who face exclusion from the labour market to find and keep competitive employment while receiving the support they need to succeed. Over the past decade, IPS has transformed employment support within mental health, drug and alcohol treatment and other healthcare services across England, helping thousands of people move into work and build confidence, financial stability and purpose in their lives.

IPS Grow was established by Social Finance to support this transformation. IPS Grow works with services, commissioners and partners across England to expand high-quality IPS provision. Our role is to support the growth of IPS services, improve quality and learning across the system, and ensure the evidence and data behind IPS continue to demonstrate its impact.

As IPS continues to expand nationally, IPS Grow is entering an important new phase. Our team has grown rapidly, our partnerships have broadened, and the demand for high-quality IPS services continues to increase. To support this next stage of development, we are now seeking a Chief Operating Officer to join the IPS Grow Senior Leadership Team.

The Chief Operating Officer will play a central role in ensuring IPS Grow has the systems, infrastructure and operational strength required to deliver impact at scale. Working alongside me and the wider leadership team, the COO will provide strategic oversight across key operational functions, including finance, data and digital, marketing and communications, governance, business support and project management.

IPS Grow is transitioning from a fast growing programme into a mature national organisation that is integral to Social Finance's work and a clear demonstration of how we can successfully scale a solution. The IPS Grow COO will play a key role in ensuring we have the structures, processes, and culture required to support this evolution and continued growth. This includes robust financial oversight, strong governance and risk management, effective workforce and resource planning, and systems that enable teams to deliver consistently high quality work. Strengthening data and digital capability will also be a priority. IPS Grow is continuing to build its data infrastructure, including a CRM and reporting systems that support performance monitoring, service improvement, and national level insight.

We are seeking a collaborative and strategic operational leader who enjoys building organisations that enable others to succeed. You will bring senior leadership experience across operational functions such as finance, data, digital systems or organisational operations, alongside the financial literacy needed to oversee complex budgets and work closely with finance colleagues.

Experience working within publicly funded services or contract-driven environments – such as health, social care or other public service delivery settings – would be valuable. Just as important are your leadership qualities. IPS Grow operates as a collaborative leadership team, and the COO will play an important role in strengthening a “one team” culture across a geographically dispersed organisation. You will be someone who can build trusted relationships, bring clarity to operational challenges, and work alongside colleagues as both a strategic partner and a practical problem solver. You will also be visible as a senior leader within the wider Social Finance business.

Social Finance is committed to building a diverse and inclusive team that reflects the communities we serve. We welcome applications from people with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, and we value leaders who bring empathy, openness and a commitment to inclusive practice.



This is an exciting opportunity to help shape the next phase of IPS Grow's development. If this resonates with you, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Niall O'Reilly
Executive Director – IPS Grow

About Social Finance

Social Finance is an ambitious not for profit organisation that helps to design, fund and scale better solutions to complex social problems. Our vision is a fairer world where together we unleash the potential of people and communities. We do this by working in partnership with local and national governments, funders, communities and the social sector to tackle complex and enduring social problems in the UK and across the world.

Our skills include financial analysis, data and digital insight, outcomes-focused partnerships, strategy, research and design. We combine these specialisms in different ways to address specific social challenges. We create effective solutions that blend the expertise of communities and professionals to deliver better outcomes in issues such as homelessness, domestic abuse, children's services, health, employment and skills.

Our multi-skilled team of over 120 people come from diverse backgrounds in the public, private and charity sectors, all sharing a passion for making change happen. We provide a high-quality training and development programme in-house with great opportunities for career progression. We're a friendly and intellectually curious bunch, always up for a debate.

Our work improves the lives of people and communities in the UK and across the world. We are experts in systems change – shifting the way a whole system works around a specific social issue in order to ensure long-lasting change. Examples include:

Employment & skills

Scaling evidence-based employment services through IPS Grow.

Health & social care

Investing in health transformation, such as in End of Life Care services.

Children & young people

Maximising access to education by building more inclusive systems.

Housing & homelessness

Developing innovative funding models to help meet government new homes supply.

Our approach is a collaborative one, where we bring the best capabilities and people from across the organisation together to solve the challenges we face.

What is IPS?

In less than three years, the number of people with severe mental illness or complex mental health supported through Independent Placement and Support (IPS) services in England has grown by 71%, from 27,490 in April 2023 to 47,085 in December 2025.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an employment support approach that was originally developed for people experiencing mental health and addiction issues. The approach is now increasingly being implemented in a range of settings including supporting veterans, people with physical health issues and prison leavers.

IPS offers intensive, individually tailored support to help people to choose and find the right job, with ongoing support for the employer and employee to help ensure the person keeps their job.

- IPS uses a personalised and strength-based approach to support people to find a job of their choosing.
- IPS aims to help people find paid jobs within just weeks of being referred to the service.
- Then it continues to work with both employer and employee to sustain the job placement for as long as possible, or to help the client into a different job.
- IPS directly tackles the lack of integration of healthcare and employment services and the disconnection of different specialists by integrating employment specialists into health teams.

IPS is based on 8 evidence-based principles. These include a focus on competitive employment, rather than volunteering or sheltered work; zero exclusion, open to all who want to work; and close integration between employment specialists and mental health teams.

Martin's Story

Martin's story is one of quiet determination, showing how the right support helped him rebuild his confidence, regain his independence, and find a job that truly fits who he is. When Martin was referred to the IPS Service, he met Dan, his Employment Specialist. To hear more about Martin & Dan's story, you can [watch their interview on YouTube](#).



About IPS Grow

IPS Grow was set up by Social Finance to expand Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services across England, helping thousands of people with health conditions to find meaningful work.

Led by Social Finance and delivered in partnership with NHS England, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), IPS Grow supports the system to scale a proven employment model that improves health and reduces economic inactivity. Its success is built on what we learned over 10 years of overseeing the Mental Health Employment Partnership (MHEP), the world's first Social Outcomes Partnership focused on IPS.

IPS Grow's core mission is to help people into high-quality work, not by delivering Individual Placement and Support (IPS) directly, but by acting as a central support service for the organisations that do.

Our support for IPS providers, health services, NHS Trusts and commissioners includes:

Implementation support

Which often involves organisational and culture change.

Quality assurance Fidelity reviews

Helping services understand what they are doing well, and how they can continue to improve their performance and job outcomes via robust Fidelity Action Plans and good team leadership.

Technical IPS on-site support

Helping providers to implement IPS practice on the ground which might include effective integration into clinical teams, building senior buy in and improving employer engagement.

A range of training

Including free e-learning courses.

Communities of practice networks

Bringing IPS providers together so we can all learn together about how to make IPS work on the ground and achieve good quality outcomes for the people we serve.

Workforce strategies

To support the expanding workforce as IPS develops nationally.



We also aim to bring together a range of national stakeholders to support the development and expansion of IPS across England via the England IPS Expert Forum.

Expanding IPS has been a priority for Social Finance since 2015 and continues to be an integral part of our work today.

Watch [this video](#) to see the IPS Grow team in action.

Job Description

Job title: Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Reporting to: Executive Director – IPS Grow

Purpose of the Role:

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is a core member of the IPS Grow Senior Leadership Team, alongside the Executive Director – IPS Grow, Director – IPS Delivery, Director – Research & Innovation. Responsible for the strategic and operational oversight of IPS Grow's finance, data and digital, marketing and communications, business support, governance, resourcing, project management and organisational development functions.

The COO ensures IPS Grow has the infrastructure, systems, culture and operational excellence required to deliver highperforming Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services across England.

The postholder reports directly to the Executive Director – IPS Grow and deputises for them as required.

Key Responsibilities

Leadership and Organisational Strategy

- Serve as the deputy to the Executive Director – IPS Grow, representing IPS Grow within Social Finance and with external partners when required.
- Provide strategic leadership across IPS Grow's operational functions to ensure alignment with the IPS Grow Strategy.
- Lead the IPS Grow annual planning cycle, coordinating with the Executive Director – IPS Grow, Director of Delivery – IPS Grow, and Director for Research and Innovation – IPS Grow.

- Ensure all operational functions deliver effectively against contract requirements and organisational priorities.
- Support the ongoing development and delivery of the IPS Grow Strategy and key strategic workstreams (e.g., race equity, quality improvement).
- Build a cohesive 'one team' culture across IPS Grow, ensuring consistency of practice and collaborative working.

Financial Oversight and Resource Planning

- Provide strategic oversight of the IPS Grow finance function, working closely with Social Finance's Finance Director and finance team colleagues.
- Ensure IPS Grow has accurate, up-to-date budgets and that teams are fully engaged in the annual budgeting process.
- Monitor spend against profiles, ensuring correct allocation of costs across projects and funders.
- Identify and escalate variances to the Executive Director – IPS Grow, agreeing reprofiles or remediation actions.
- Use financial insights to drive cost efficiency, quality improvement and long-term resource planning.
- Act as senior IPS Grow lead for resourcing, workforce planning and alignment with Social Finance HR and the Resourcing Lead.

Strategic Lead for Data and Digital

- Provide senior leadership to the IPS Grow data function, line managing the Head of Data & Analytics – IPS Grow.

- Ensure effective oversight of all IPS Grow data systems, including the CRM and Reporting Tool.
- Oversee prioritisation, planning and budgeting of digital developments led by the Data Manager – IPS Grow.
- Ensure IPS Grow's data analysis, reporting and business intelligence meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders.
- Act as senior escalation point for any data issues, concerns or complaints, ensuring timely and appropriate resolution.
- Ensure contract KPIs and quality requirements relating to data and digital delivery are met.

Strategic Lead for Marketing and Communications

- Line manage the Head of Workforce and Engagement, providing strategic oversight for IPS Grow's marketing and communications function.
- Ensure IPS Grow has effective strategies in place to raise the profile of IPS, demonstrate service impact and share personal stories.
- Oversee the IPS Grow communications plan, ensuring high-quality reports, social media content, and events (including the IPS Grow Annual Conference).
- Track and evaluate the impact of marketing and communications activities.
- Act as senior link with commissioners, Social Finance colleagues and key stakeholders on communications.
- Ensure contract KPIs and quality requirements relating to communications are met.

Job Description (Continued)

Business Support, Governance and Project Management

- Provide senior leadership for IPS Grow's administrative and business support functions, ensuring effective operational processes.
- Lead the project management function for IPS Grow, ensuring delivery and transformation projects are wellgoverned, resourced and executed to a high standard.
- Act as key senior contact with Social Finance's HR function, ensuring excellent processes for people, performance and workforce support.
- Support effective governance of IPS Grow, including facilitating the Health Employment Partnerships Board and IPS Expert Forum.
- Oversee IPS Grow's internal governance, ensuring strong decisionmaking structures, documentation and accountability.
- Lead IPS Grow's risk management approach, ensuring clear ownership, monitoring and mitigation of organisational risks.

Organisational Development, Learning and Culture

- Act as senior IPS Grow lead for organisational learning and development.
- Support colleagues to set and achieve meaningful learning goals.
- Ensure IPS Grow's culture is positive, inclusive and aligned with Social Finance values.
- Work closely with colleagues across IPS Grow to address common challenges and support high-quality practice across all regions.
- Build and maintain strong links with Social Finance teams, Communities of Practice and Communities of Impact.
- Lead agreed initiatives related to organisational development, culture and equity.

External Engagement and Representation

- Engage with commissioners, NHS partners, local stakeholders and the wider IPS community to ensure strong relationships and effective delivery.
- Represent IPS Grow externally in meetings, sector events, and Communities of Practice.
- Oversee creation of regional and national reports for funders and stakeholders, ensuring accuracy and timeliness.
- Act as an ambassador for IPS Grow, Social Finance and the IPS model.

Person Specification



Skills and Experience

Essential

- Extensive senior leadership experience of multiple functions such as finance, data and digital, communications, business operations or programme delivery.
- Experience shaping organisational strategy and leading operational delivery, including annual planning cycles, organisational change, and continuous improvement.
- Strong financial literacy, with experience overseeing complex budgets and using financial insight to support effective resource allocation and organisational decision-making.
- Experience overseeing data, digital or performance functions, including systems such as CRM platforms, reporting tools and business intelligence used to monitor performance and impact.
- Experience working in contract and service delivery environments, with an understanding of performance management, reporting requirements and accountability to commissioners or funders.
- Strong people leadership and organisational development capability, with a track record of building collaborative, inclusive and high-performing teams.
- Excellent stakeholder engagement and partnership skills, with the ability to work effectively with commissioners, partners, senior leaders and cross-organisational teams.

Desirable

- Experience working in publicly funded environments, such as health, social care or other public services.

Personal Attributes:

- Highly collaborative, with a commitment to a “one team” culture.
- Solutions-focused, with the ability to anticipate and resolve operational challenges.
- Strong communicator with the ability to influence and engage at all levels.
- Commitment to equity, learning and continuous improvement.
- Ability to act as a credible ambassador for IPS Grow and the IPS model.



Terms of Appointment

Salary	£90,000 per annum
Contract	Permanent, full-time. We support a range of flexible working options.
Location	Regular travel to Social Finance's London office (London Bridge) and to clients or partners around the UK will be required. We welcome UK based applications from outside of London/ the Southeast so far as they can meet the in-person meeting requirements for the role.
Pension	Contributory pension scheme (matched 4%).
Annual leave	We offer a generous annual holiday allowance of 28 days, plus additional leave between Christmas and New Year when the office is closed.
Additional	Healthcare cash plan; Enhanced maternity and paternity policies; Volunteer leave; Employee assistance programme; Cycle to work scheme; Give as you earn; Ability to buy & sell annual leave; flexible working options; Regular company events throughout the year.

Working for a mission driven organisation is more than just what we pay, it's about our culture, our approach and what else we offer. Read more about working at Social Finance [here](#).

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We actively encourage applications from under-represented and minoritised groups, including those with lived experience of the social issues we are working to address. We are an equal opportunities employer.

We support a range of flexible working options and welcome UK based applications from outside of London/ the Southeast so far as they can meet the in-person meeting requirements for the role. We can also accommodate secondments and part-time working.

We work on some projects where our clients may require different levels of DBS checking for our employees. Candidates deemed suitable for a role after interview will be asked to declare any unspent convictions to ensure that we are able to resource them to projects appropriately.

How to apply



Tall Roots is acting as an employment agency partner to Social Finance. Applications should be made online at www.tallroots.co.uk/sf-ipsgrow-coo and include:

- a CV
- a Covering Letter that provides brief responses to the following four questions:
 1. What is motivating you to become our new Chief Operating Officer for IPS Grow? *(200 words)*
 2. Given what you have read about us so far, what do you believe would make an effective Chief Operating Officer for IPS Grow? *(200 words)*
 3. Please describe your experience ensuring an organisation had the right systems, processes or capabilities in place to use data effectively. What was your role and what difference did this make? *(250 words)*
 4. Please tell us about a time when you built strong partnerships across teams or organisations to deliver a shared goal. What approach did you take and what was the outcome? *(250 words)*

The closing date for applications is **Friday 10th April 2026**.

Preliminary interviews with Tall Roots will be held virtually during **w/c 20th April 2026**.

First round interviews with Social Finance are planned for **w/c 4th May 2026**.

Final interviews with Social Finance are planned for **w/c 11th May 2026**.

If you have any questions relating to the role or the process, or would like any adjustments made to accommodate your needs, please contact Tall Roots by email at hello@tallroots.co.uk.



Tall Roots Search
Recruiting exceptional leaders for inspiring organisations
www.tallroots.co.uk

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