Gravesham Borough Council

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| Division: | Corporate Services |
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| Department: | Revenues & Benefits |
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| Post Title: | Benefit Assessment Officer |
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| Grade: | Scale 3/4/5 |
|  |  |
| Hours | 37 |
|  |  |
| Responsible to: | Team Leader Assessments |

**Job Description**

This job description is intended as a working document only, giving a guideline to the major tasks to be performed. It is anticipated that the post will develop as working practices change in order to meet the demands of the service, new legislation or policies of the council. It is expected the post holder will contribute to and assist in the development of such changes

**Job summary**

To be an active member of a team providing a quality service that is Customer focused, modern and efficient. Subject to the instructions of the Team Leader Assessments, to assess entitlement to, make payment of and to recover as necessary Benefits for Council Tax and for tenants in the private and public rented sectors complying with Statute and Council policy in all respects.

**Main responsibilities**

Administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction including;

Assessing, calculating and amending benefits in accordance with legislation, DWP guidelines and local policy

Obtaining information to make determinations by means of effective verbal and written communication

Undertaking visits to claimants as required.

Consider and make recommendations in respect of claims, and or appeals made to the Council in cases where 'discretion' is available within regulations.

Updating and maintaining computer and manual records of claim details.

Ensuring that all benefit is either applied to the appropriate accounts or in the case of Private Tenants paid by BACS.

Recovering benefit overpayments by means of Sundry Debtor Accounts, deductions from on-going benefit or debiting personal accounts as considered appropriate.

Knowledge of complex legislation, regulations, guidelines and government circulars.

An understanding of the requirements of verifying a claimant’s identity and original documentation to support their claim

To refer cases of irregularities and fraud, if suspected to the Fraud Team.

Liaising with Government Departments and other external organisations/providers (e.g. Citizens Advice, Probation Service, Landlords, Estate Agents etc.) in relation to Benefit Administration and in respect of cases dealt with by those organisations as appropriate.

Liaising with internal departments such as Council Tax, Housing and Customer Services in respect of cases dealt with by those sections.

Be competent in answering all types of general correspondence in the format of a formal letter

Be able to deal with reconsiderations, appeals and backdating requests.

To assist with the provision of a high quality Benefit Service including giving advice and dealing with enquiries both face to face and on the telephone.

To provide a high quality customer service, working to maximise benefit entitlement and prevent arrears wherever possible.

To actively support the development of current and emerging technology

**General**

To carry out such other duties as may be required of you, commensurate with the grade and level of responsibility, as directed by management.

To participate as required in the Council’s Emergency Planning Operations which may involve duties outside the post holder’s normal job description and contracted hours.  In the event that an incident has occurred which disrupts the council’s ability to deliver it’s critical functions, the post holder will be expected to participate in the recovery stage which may include undertaking duties within the post holder’s competencies in other departments and/or at other locations.

A commitment and contribution to the Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy is an essential requirement of the post.

The post holder will carry out all duties and activities having regard to the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and in accordance with any instructions from senior members of staff under that Act or any Council or Departmental Codes of Practice or Procedures.

The post holder must ensure that data quality and integrity is maintained and that data is processed in accordance with council policy, the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act and other legislation

The post holder will comply with Statute and Council Policy in all respects.

An awareness and commitment to section 17 which places a statutory duty on police and local authorities to work in partnership to reduce crime and promote community safety. It is also required that community safety is to be a thread running through all functions of the LA

A commitment to excellent customer service and the values of the Council

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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| Characteristic | Specification | |
|  | ESSENTIAL | DESIRABLE |
| **SKILLS/ABILITIES**  (Specific skills and abilities required to undertake the duties) | Good customer care skills dealing with and advising members of the public in a professional manner under all circumstances  Able to liaise confidently and professionally with people at all levels  Good communication skills both written and verbal  Excellent IT skills e.g., Word and Excel  Able to demonstrate a good level of numeracy |  |
| **KNOWLEDGE**  (Particular knowledge which will be necessary to perform the work effectively, e.g. of specific legislation or regulations) | Knowledge of Gravesham Borough Council and the services it provides.  Knowledge of the Housing Benefit Regulations  Knowledge of Gravesham’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme Regulations  Knowledge of and the understanding of the importance of confidentiality and data protection |  |
| **QUALIFICATION**  **TRAINING**  (Educational/vocational qualifications and other training)  Verification will be required | A minimum of 5 passes at GCSE (grades 9 to 4 or previously Grade A\*, A. B or C) including English and Mathematics |  |
| **EXPERIENCE**  (Level and type of previous experience) | Proven experience in customer service  Proven experience of working in a Benefits environment and in particular processing claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction | Experience of working on NEC’s Revenues & Benefit and Document Management System |

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| **QUALITIES**  (Particular qualities necessary to carry out the works, e.g. ability to work under pressure or work co-operatively in a team) | Shows a personal; commitment to the work of the service, taking ownership of tasks and seeking to meet set deadlines and targets  Trustworthy honest and assertive and able to work on own initiative  Good telephone manner  Good team player  Highly Organised |  |
| **SPECIAL CONDITIONS**  (e.g. willingness to work unsocial hours or wear a uniform) | Commitment to equal opportunities |  |