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| **Job Description** | |
| **Post title** | Assessment and Awards Officer |
| **JE Reference No** | N9456 |
| **Grade** | Grade 5 |
| **Service** | Resources |
| **Service Area** | Finance & Transactional Services - Assessment and Awards |
| **Reporting to** | Assessment & Awards Team Leader |
| **Location** | Your normal place of work will be Green Lane, Spennymoor, but you may be required to work at any Council workplace within County Durham. |
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| **DBS** | This post is subject to a Basic Disclosure. |
| **Flexitime** | This post is eligible for flexitime. |
| **Politically restricted** | This post is not designated as a politically restricted post in accordance with the requirements of Section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and by regulations made from time to time by the Secretary of State. |

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| **Description of role** |

Providing a quality safe and cost effective service to customers, including the provision of first line contact and prompt and efficient handling of any queries or problems

To assess Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Council Tax liabilities, exemptions and discounts in accordance with legislation, case law, and the working practices and procedures of the council to the required standards of accuracy and achieving agreed clearance times as laid out in the Service plan. Including property inspections and external visits as required.

To undertake targeted reviews of Benefit assessment, Council Tax exemptions, discounts and reduction, including the recovery of any overpayments of Benefit.

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| **Duties and responsibilities** |

Listed below are the responsibilities this role will be primarily responsible for:

* Supporting and assisting the Assessment & Awards Senior Officer in the day-to-day provision of Financial Services – Assessment and Awards, in accordance with Council Policies and all relevant Regulations.
* To be responsible for processing all work allocated to them by the Assessment and Awards Senior Officer, in accordance with the Services performance indicators and office procedures
* To be conversant and maintain a good working knowledge of all legislation, procedures and working practices relating to Housing Benefits, Council Tax Exemptions & Discounts and Durham County Council’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
* Provide a customer orientated service and carrying Assessment and Awards functions in line with Value for Money principals
* The collation of information to assist in the decision making process of benefit entitlement and the safe, secure and accurate billing ensuring customers receive all benefits and discounts they are entitled to.
* The safe, secure and accurate calculation of entitlement to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax liabilities, exemptions and discounts and ensuring compliance with legislation and procedures whilst maximising income for the Council.
* To undertake property inspections and external visits as required to ensure the accurate calculation of Council Tax liabilities, including exemptions and discounts and entitlement to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction.
* Undertake target reviews, including data matching exercises, of Benefit assessments, Council Tax reductions, discounts to ensure ongoing compliance.
* Maximise income for the Council through the identifying and recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit, and identifying and initiating recovery of Council Tax Reduction, Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions
* Communication with the Council’s customers, whether in person, by telephone or in writing, at the Council’s offices, at the customers home, or at other relevant premises in order to collate information to assist in the decision making process.
* The notification to customers of the results of their applications and any subsequent changes that affect their award of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Council Tax liability.
* To visit customers in their homes or in other locations to assist them in applying for benefit, reduction, discount, exemption and to check for relevant documentation to support their application and assist with the maximisation of income for both them and the Council.
* Protect vulnerable customers through the application of the Council’s Discretionary and Safeguard Policies and Debt Management Strategy ensuring that customers have all benefits, discounts and reliefs that they are entitled to.
* Maximise income for the Council through the identifying and initiating recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions.
* Maximise income for the Customer through the identification and appropriate application of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions
* To give accurate advice to customers, at first line contact, providing a prompt and efficient handling of any queries or problems including providing explanation of how a bill or benefit has been calculated.
* To liaise with internal services and external partners including Government Departments and Agencies as required.
* To provide support or mentoring to colleagues and partners as required
* Working with the minimum of supervision to achieve high levels of performance for the Financial Services – Assessment and Awards Service.
* The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by the Head of Service.

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| **Organisational responsibilities** |

* **Values and behaviours**

To demonstrate and be a role model for the council’s values and behaviours to promote and encourage positive behaviours, enhancing the quality and integrity of the services we provide.

* **Smarter working, transformation and design principles**

To seek new and innovative ideas to work smarter, irrespective of job role, and to be creative, innovative and empowered. Understand the operational impact of transformational change and service design principles to support new ways of working and to meet customer needs.

* **Communication**

To communicate effectively with our customers, managers, peers and partners and to work collaboratively to provide the best possible public service. Communication between teams, services and partner organisations is imperative in providing the best possible service to our public.

* **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

To take responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing in accordance with the council’s Health and Safety policy and procedures.

* **Equality and diversity**

To promote a society that gives everyone an equal chance to learn, work and live, free from discrimination and prejudice and ensure our commitment is put into practice. All employees are responsible for eliminating unfair and unlawful discrimination in everything that they do.

* **Confidentiality**

To work in a way that does not divulge personal and/or confidential information and follow the council’s policies and procedures in relation to data protection and security of information.

* **Climate Change**

To contribute to our corporate responsibility in relation to climate change by considering and limiting the carbon impact of activities during the course of your work, wherever possible.

* **Performance management**

To promote a culture whereby performance management is ingrained and the highest of standards and performance are achieved by all. Contribute to the council’s Performance and Development Review processes to ensure continuous learning and improvement and to increase organisational performance.

* **Quality assurance (for applicable posts)**

To set, monitor and evaluate standards at individual, team and service level so that the highest standards of service are delivered and maintained. Use data, where appropriate, to enhance the quality of service provision and support decision making processes.

* **Management and leadership (for applicable posts)**

To provide vision and leadership to inspire and empower all employees so they can reach their full potential and contribute to the council’s values and behaviours. Managers and leaders must engage in personal development to ensure they are equipped to lead transformational change; always searching for better ways to do things differently to meet organisational changes and service priorities.

* **Financial management (for applicable posts)**

To manage a designated budget, ensuring that the service achieves value for money in all circumstances through the monitoring of expenditure and the early identification of any financial irregularity.

*The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by your manager.*

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| Person specification | | |
|  | Essential | Desirable |
| Qualifications | NVQ Level 3 or equivalent  Or  Level 2/3 and relevant experience:   * assessing income related benefits or * processing Council Tax or Business Rates liabilities | * IRRV technician/certificate |
| Experience | * Dealing with members of the public in a caring, responsive manner * Operating on line computer system | * Previous experience of working within a Revenues/Benefits team |
| Skills & Knowledge | * Excellent Administrative Skills * Sound organisational and time management skills (inc. ability to meet deadlines) * Highly numerate (inc. ability to calculate claims and liabilities) * Good I.T. skills * Effective communication/interpersonal skills | * Knowledge of Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Rents, Sundry Debtors regulations and legislation * Knowledge of Civica Systems |
| Personal Qualities | * Team player * Highly motivated and enthusiastic, able to work individually and as part of a team * Flexible approach to work * Caring, responsive and customer orientated * Willingness to undergo further training * Access to a car or means of mobility support (if driving then must have a current valid driving licence and appropriate insurance) * May be required to work outside of normal office hours |  |