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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 Senior Officer |
| **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** |

To assist Transactional Services to achieve excellence in its services to its customers, both internal and external.

To provide a responsive, efficient and cost effective service to customers, including the provision of first line contact, with prompt and efficient handling of queries or problems.

To assess Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Council Tax liabilities, exemptions and discounts in accordance with Council Policies, relevant legislation, case law, working practices and procedures of the council to the required standards of accuracy.

Property inspections and external visits as required.

To undertake targeted reviews of Benefit entitlements, Council Tax exemptions, discounts and reduction, including the recovery of any overpayments of Housing 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 the service in accordance with Council Policies and all relevant Regulations.
* To be responsible for processing all work allocated by the 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.
* To undertake the Assessment & 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 assist customers and 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.
* Assist customers in applying for benefit, reductions, discounts, exemptions 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.
* 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 new members and existing staff to assist in any learning needs as required.
* Working with the minimum of supervision to achieve high levels of performance for the customer and 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 | Relevant Level 2 qualification or equivalent  Or  Experience of working in a finance or similar environment. | * IRRV Qualification |
| Experience | * Dealing with members of the public in a caring and responsive manner * I.T. and keyboarding skills to enable accuracy when updating data systems. * Working collaboratively with colleagues and stakeholders | * Previous experience of working within a Revenues/Benefits/Finance Team or similar environment * Experience of updating data systems * Experience of following a defined process and procedure |
| Skills & Knowledge | * Good organisational and time management skills, including the ability to meet deadlines. * Good numeracy skills * Good communication and interpersonal skills, both written and verbal with the , ability to converse at ease with customers and provide advice in accurate spoken English. | * Knowledge of Housing Benefit, Council Tax, regulations and legislation * Knowledge of Civica Systems * Knowledge of the use of Microsoft applications |
| Personal Qualities | * Highly motivated and enthusiastic, having the ability to work individually and as part of a team * Flexible approach to work * Willingness to undergo ongoing training as appropriate or for the requirements of the post * Access to a car or means of mobility support (if driving then must have a current valid driving licence and appropriate insurance) |  |