

Northumberland County Council
JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: Benefit Assessment Officer		Director/Service/Sector Finance Group/ Financial Services/ Revenues and Benefits		Office Use
Band: 5		Workplace:		JE ref: 133 HRMS ref:
Responsible to: Benefit Assessment Team Leader		Date: November 2008	Manager Level:	
Job Purpose: To assess and maintain claims for housing benefit and council tax benefit; answer customers' enquiries and give them relevant advice. A key role is to encourage benefit take-up and the prompt reporting of changes.				
Resources		Staff	None	
		Finance	None	
		Physical	Office equipment	
		Clients	Council Tax Payers and Benefits Claimants	
Duties and key result areas: 1. Verify, determine and process all types of housing benefit and council tax benefit claims and changes of circumstance 2. Issue requests for information as required and take follow-up action including suspension and cancellation 3. Revise decisions as necessary on receipt of new information or evidence 4. Notify customers of their entitlement and appeal rights 5. At all contact with claimants, payees and their representatives, emphasise their duty to notify all changes promptly, encourage them to do so, and inform or remind them of how and where to make such reports 6. Determine the cause and recoverability of overpayments and excess benefit and if recoverable decide from whom to seek recovery 7. Encourage benefit take up in all contact with customers and their representatives 8. Participate in benefit take-up campaigns as directed, including attendance at community venues and public locations 9. On a rota basis or as directed, attend interviews with customers and/or their representatives at a Council office or other venue 10. Be vigilant to the threat of potential fraud and make referrals to the Council's Fraud function as necessary 11. Carry out appropriate checks using CIS in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding 12. Make decisions on claims for backdating 13. Consider requests for discretionary housing payments and make recommendations to Team Leader 14. Attend meetings and training courses as required 15. Keep up to date with changing legislation 16. Assist testing changes in computer software 17. Provide advice and information to customers and their representatives as required The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and extent of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.				
Work Arrangements				
Transport requirements:		None		
Working patterns:		Flexible		
Working conditions:				

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Post Title: Benefits Officer	Director/Service/Sector Finance Group/ Financial Services/ Revenues and Benefits	Ref: 133
Essential	Desirable	Asses s by
Knowledge and Qualifications		
4 GCSE's or equivalent inc Maths and English		
Experience		
- Experience of working in a Benefits Section in a local authority - Experience of being part of a team		
Skills and competencies		
- Excellent communication skills both written and verbal - Good Listening skills - Ability to work to deadlines - Ability to work as part of a team - High degree of confidentiality required - Ability to keep accurate computerised and written records and reports of action taken - Organisational and time management skills - Diplomacy, tact, influencing and negotiating skills		
Physical, mental and emotional demands		
- Ability to work on own initiative - Must be punctual and reliable - Able to deal confidently with a full range of requests and respond in a mature and courteous manner in sometimes difficult situations		
Other		

Key to assessment methods; (a) application form, (i) interview, (r) references, (t) ability tests (q) personality questionnaire (g) assessed group work, (p) presentation, (o) others e.g. case studies/visits