



**North  
Northamptonshire  
Council**

## **Job Description and Person Specification**

### **Job details**

Job title: Benefits Officer

Grade: TBC

Reports to: Benefits Team Leader

Responsible for: N/A

Directorate and Service area: Finance & Performance Directorate, Revenues and Benefits Services.

### **Purpose of the job**

In accordance with current legislation and Council policy establish eligibility for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support and, once established, collate and verify the necessary information required to accurately determine claims ensuring that both the correct entitlement is awarded and the correct Housing Benefit subsidy, if applicable, is applied. Receive and determine all changes in circumstances as appropriate within defined timescales.

### **Principal responsibilities**

1. Receive via post, counter, email and online Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support applications and determine eligibility depending upon claimant's age, accommodation type and personal circumstances in accordance with primary, secondary legislation and Council policy.
2. Once eligibility is established, request all necessary documentary evidence required in order to determine the claimant's entitlement, from the claimant, landlord, third party, Department for Work and Pensions and HMRC as appropriate. This includes proactively telephoning customers to request information to enable their claim to be dealt with more efficiently.
3. Assess the eligible claims for Housing Benefit in accordance with the appropriate scheme and in line with current legislation. Assess claims for Council Tax Support, in line with current legislation and the authority's own Council Tax Support Scheme. Convey the decision made to the customer and landlord if appropriate.
4. Receive, check and record on the system for accuracy all change of circumstance information received from the claimant, landlord, third parties, ATLAS, VEP, and UCDS and amend claims as required within defined timescales and current primary and secondary legislation.
5. Be proactive in identifying false and fraudulent claims and refer to the Fraud and Error Service at DWP when appropriate
6. Maintain accurate, current and accessible records of all claims on the computerized system, with details of all decisions made clearly annotated.
7. Arrange the periodic review of claims as appropriate.
8. Issue invoices for Housing Benefit Overpayments to claimants and landlords in line with current legislation and case law.
9. Recovery of Housing Benefit Overpayments from ongoing entitlement to Housing Benefit and other methods available where appropriate and in line with current legislation and case law.
10. Deal with enquiries in respect of all claims by correspondence, telephone, email and personal interview as appropriate.
11. Provide advice to the public on their entitlement to Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, but provide additional advice regarding DWP benefits such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit.
12. Liaise with colleagues in other departments such as Council Tax, Social Inclusion Team, Customer Services and Housing Options and promote good relationships with external parties such as landlords and appointees.

## **General responsibilities applicable to all jobs**

1. Demonstrate awareness/understanding of equal opportunities and other people's behavioural, physical, social and welfare needs.
2. Comply with the Council's policies and procedures including (but not limited to) safeguarding, financial regulations, promotion of equalities, customer care, agreed audit actions and health and safety (ensuring that reasonable care is taken at all times for the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other persons).
3. Understand the council's commitment to Corporate Parenting and take responsibility to support this commitment. Enable the council to be the best corporate parents possible to children and young people in our current and previous care.
4. Carry out any other duties which fall within the broad spirit, scope and purpose of this job description and which are commensurate with the grade of the post.

This job description reflects the major tasks to be carried out by the post holder and identifies a level of responsibility at which they will be required to work. In the interests of effective working, the major tasks may be reviewed from time to time to reflect changing needs and circumstances. Such reviews and any consequential changes will be carried out in consultation with the post holder.

## Person Specification

Attributes	Essential criteria	Desirable criteria
Education, Qualifications and Training	English and Maths GCSE grade C or above / proven literacy and numeracy skills.	IRRV Technician
Experience and Knowledge	<p>Significant relevant current and demonstrable experience of assessing claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.</p> <p>Demonstrate ability to understand, interpret and explain complicated government legislation and the ability to keep up to date with frequent legislative and procedural changes.</p>	Knowledge of welfare benefits.
Ability and Skills	<p>Good verbal (fluent English) and written communication skills with the ability to support and negotiate with customers, landlords and stakeholders in a calm, sensitive way in difficult situations.</p> <p>Proven ability to work on own initiative with the minimum of supervision and to use own discretion and judgement.</p>	

Attributes	Essential criteria	Desirable criteria
	Ability to prioritise own workload.	
Equal Opportunities	Ability to demonstrate awareness/understanding of equal opportunities and other people's behaviour, physical, social and welfare needs.	
Additional Factors	<p>Computer literate.</p> <p>Accurate.</p> <p>Ability to work to deadlines and Government targets.</p>	<p>Experience using Office suite.</p> <p>Experience of Electronic Document Management System.</p>