WHERE CAREERS THRIVE

When potential is unlocked, talent *thrives*

West Northamptonshire Council

Debt and Welfare Benefits Officer

Revenues and Benefits, Resources

Thank you for your interest in this role. Our vision at West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is: 'to make West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive'.

We truly stand by this and work hard every day to make this a reality, and at WNC it's about our people. People who thrive with ambition, bring new ideas, demand better ways of working, care about every detail, and who never shy away from a challenge.

Our culture is a gateway for new experiences. A place to forge new opportunities. To empower you in your career and unite you with like-minded people. When potential is unlocked, talent thrives.

West Northamptonshire Council

Purpose and impact:

To support vulnerable residents across the district, to offer advice on all welfare benefits and to assess potential entitlement to these benefits ensuring income maximisation and prevention of homelessness.

To provide an effective and efficient debt advice service to ensure tenancy sustainment, to prevent homelessness and at the same time maximise income to the Council from Council Tax.
To provide support to and cover for the Senior Debt and Welfare Benefits Officer as required.

Accountable to:

This role is accountable to the Debt and Welfare Benefits Team Leader. The role sits within Revenue and Benefits Services, part of the Resources Directorate in West Northamptonshire Council.

Responsibilities:

1. To be responsible for providing advice and support to residents who require debt and/or welfare benefit advice and support with an emphasis on tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention carrying out financial calculations, negotiations with third parties and presenting cases to tribunals for benefit related issues.

2. To manage and prioritise a caseload of clients experiencing financial and personal difficulties or exclusion aiming to minimise debt and maximise benefit take-up with a particular emphasis on tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.

3. To keep up to date with ever changing complex legislation, case law and procedures relating to debt advice and welfare benefits and to undertake appropriate training as required.

4. To act as a key contact for both internal and external partners and to develop these partnerships including offering support to housing and revenues colleagues as required.

5. To maintain accurate, comprehensive and up to date register of clients to enable statistical information, returns and reports to be produced as required in respect of performance indicators, DWP returns, and Cabinet/Board reports.

6. To collate customer satisfaction/feedback data and analyse this data in order to suggest service improvements.

7. Contribute to the production of publications, such as forms, information booklets and newsletters and information on the Council website.

8. Undertake complex Welfare Benefits cases, guiding and advising clients as appropriate on applications, re-consideration requests and submissions to Appeals Tribunal, providing representation for clients at such hearings as required.

9. To represent the Council and clients at Court as and when required.

10. Use Microsoft 365 and council systems effectively to work efficiently, collaborate with others and manage information safely, including storing, sharing and handling data securely in line with council policies.

11. Actively challenge and seek to eliminate any directly or indirectly discriminatory practice or behaviours.

12. Demonstrate awareness and understanding of other people's behavioural, physical, social and welfare needs and ensure that reasonable care is taken at all times for the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other persons.

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:

The requirements for the role are outlined below and will be part of the selection process. Each of the criteria listed below will be measured by:

(**A**) Application Form, (**T**) Test, (**I**) Interview, (**P**) Presentation, (**D**) Documentation.

Note: Where digital skills are an important part of the role, candidates may be asked to complete a separate task or assessment to demonstrate their ability to use Microsoft 365 and other relevant systems

Skills and abilities:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
A high degree of numeracy and literacy and ability to prioritise own workloads, meet deadlines and manage caseload.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Excellent communication, negotiation and advocacy skills in dealing with the public and internal and external bodies including Tribunals and Court.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Ability to prepare financial statements and budgets.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Good interpersonal skills in order to deal with very vulnerable customers and third parties often out of the office environment in an objective yet calm and compassionate manner.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Ability to work both as an individual on own initiative and as part of a team demonstrating excellent prioritisation and time management skills to achieve targets.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Ability to adopt a flexible approach to work in terms of working hours, location and duties.	Essential	A, T, I, D
The ability to travel throughout the districts and to work out of normal office hours as and when required.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Ability to demonstrate a working knowledge of equalities issues.	Desirable	A, T, I, D
This is applicable to all roles in WNC: Digital Skills: Working knowledge of Microsoft 365, including Outlook, Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, CoPilot, OneDrive and SharePoint, with the ability and willingness to use these tools confidently and effectively in day-to-day work.		A/T/I
This is applicable to all roles in WNC: Information & Data Handling**:** Able to handle information responsibly, store records securely, share data appropriately and follow council policies and procedures on data protection, records management and information security.		A/T/I

Knowledge:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
In-depth knowledge of welfare benefits and/or debt advice casework including the ability to understand and interpret complex legislation and an understanding of the procedural requirements of the Specialist Quality Mark or equivalent.	Essential	A, T, I, D

Relevant experience:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Experience in understanding and interpreting complex, ever changing legislation and understanding the procedural requirements of the Specialist Quality Mark or equivalent.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Experience in using IT in the provision of benefit and debt advice and in the preparation of statistics and reports.	Essential	A, T, I, D

Education, training and work qualifications:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
A suitable recognised qualification in debt advice or welfare benefits or qualified by experience.	Essential	A, T, I, D
Willingness to work towards recognised qualification in debt advice or welfare benefits.	Desirable	A, T, I, D

All appointments are subject to standard pre-employment screening. This will include identity, references, proof of right to work in the UK, medical clearance and verification of certificates.

Additional pre-employment checks specific to this role include
Basic Disclosure

Day-to-day in the role:

Job family and salary band:	Regulatory and Technical Band 05	**Worker type:**	Part-flexible
People management responsibility:	N/A	**Budget responsibility:**	N/A

Current pay scales and other benefits are published on the Jobs and Careers section of West Northamptonshire Council's internet.

Working conditions & how we work:
This role has been identified as a part-flexible worker type, this means that you will be able to work from other work locations and when not working from an office you will be working remotely for up to 3 days a week (including from home). You will also be required to conduct home visits where necessary and be required in the office where the demand in the service or training requires.

Our organisational values and behaviours:

Everything we want to achieve for West Northants depends on having the right people in place and doing the right things and we want all colleagues to THRIVE, both personally and professionally. Our values and our behaviours framework underpin how we work and what partners and customers can expect from us. We want to do our very best for our residents, service users and businesses and for our staff – we want everyone to THRIVE.

T	Trust	We are honest, fair, transparent and accountable. We can be trusted to do what we say we will.
H	High Performing	we get the basics right and what we do, we do well. We manage our business efficiently.
R	Respect	we respect each other and our customers in a diverse, professional and supportive environment.
I	Innovate	we encourage curiosity, we are creative and seize opportunities to grow individually as an organisation and as an area.
V	Value	We continually strive for best practice and ways of improving existing procedures, practices and systems and thereby promoting efficiency and cost effectiveness
E	Empower	we believe in people, will listen, learn and trust them to make decisions. We help people to realise their ambitions.

WNC values colleagues as individuals and encompasses our different perspectives to deliver our collective ambitions. One West inclusive culture.

Should you require this document in another format or language, please contact:
Careers@westnorthants.gov.uk

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Choose a career that offers you a true sense of achievement, fills you with pride and challenges you in a positive way, everyday.

The benefits of a career at WNC include:

- **People** are at the centre of everything we do. Without our people, we wouldn't be able to deliver services to the people in our community.
- **Ambition** runs through everything we do at West Northants Council, we nurture and develop our people's ambition and willingness to succeed, to continually improve the service we provide to the community.
- **Care** is at the heart of West Northants Council, we care in so many ways; seen and unseen, helping our colleagues and community to thrive.
- **Flexibility** is key, we know work-life balance is critical to wellbeing, so we work hard to make sure our benefits package promotes and improves wellbeing; from annual leave, sick pay, family leave and flexible working, financial security offered by a local government pension scheme and life assurance, and discount schemes which make a difference to your day-to-day life, through to employee helplines offering free legal, health, financial and wellbeing advice and support.

We want you to have balance and be happy.

West Northamptonshire Council