WHERE CAREERS THRIVE

When potential is unlocked, talent *thrives*

West Northamptonshire Council

Benefit Assessment Officer

Revenues & Benefits, Resources Directorate

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 administer Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction new claims and change in circumstances efficiently and promptly to minimise fraud and overpayments and to maximise subsidy income to the Council, in accordance with government legislation, and corporate priorities.

Accountable to:

The post holder is part of a wider team comprising a Team Leader, a Senior Officer and a team of Assessment Officers and is accountable to the Assessment Team Leader. The role sits within the Revenues and Benefits Service, which forms part of the Resources Directorate at West Northamptonshire Council

Responsibilities:

1. Interpreting and keeping up to date on complex legislation to assess and make necessary decisions on all types of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction applications including changes in circumstances. This must be done within required timescales including compiling all the necessary information to accurately calculate entitlement. This includes specialised cases such as self-employed, students and persons from abroad and ensuring notifications of entitlement are issued correctly and are legally compliant.

2. Receive and action correspondence in respect of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction from customers, landlords, Rent Service, DWP and other stakeholders including replying to requests for further information, statements of reasons, reconsiderations, and requests for backdated benefit.

3. Provide a high quality and customer focused service giving advice on Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Universal Credit and wider Welfare Benefits and Welfare Reform through face-to-face interviews, telephone, electronic channels and home visits as required.

4. Communicate and liaise with landlords, Debt and Welfare Benefit team, Housing, Revenues, the Rent Service, DWP including Universal Credit Service Centre and other stakeholders to ensure entitlement is correct, vulnerable clients are supported and to maximise income.

5. Ensure that overpayments are correctly identified and categorised in accordance with legislation and to maximise the subsidy income to the Council.

6. Prioritise and manage own workloads to ensure objectives and targets are achieved, and customer requirements are met and to identify possible fraudulent cases, refer to Corporate Fraud team and provide information and evidence as required.

7. To comply with new and existing Revenues and Benefits legislation and working practises, including keeping up to date with the contents of the procedure manual

8. Accurately maintain Council Tax records where changes are identified through Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction applications to ensure systems are aligned.

9. To undertake any other duties that can reasonably be expected of the role and the level of responsibility.

10. To maximise personal productivity, minimise duplication and errors; and 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
Good verbal and written communication skills with the ability to support and negotiate with customers, landlords and stakeholders in a calm, sensitive way in difficult situations.	Essential	A, T, I, P, D
Proven ability to work on own initiative with the minimum of supervision and to use own discretion and judgment.	Essential	A, T, I
Proven ability to prioritise large volumes of complex work to meet tight deadlines and targets while having regard to urgent more vulnerable cases and the need to be accurate.	Essential	A, T, I
Works accurately with a high attention to detail	Essential	A, T, I
Proven ability to work as an effective, flexible member of a team.	Essential	A, T, I
Equal opportunities - Ability to demonstrate awareness/understanding of equal opportunities and other people's behaviour, physical, social and welfare needs.	Essential	A, T, I
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.	Essential	A, T, I
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.	Essential	A, T, I

Knowledge:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Legislation- Demonstrate ability to understand, interpret and explain complicated government legislation and the ability to keep up to date with frequent legislative and procedural changes.	Essential	A, T, I, P, D
IT Systems- Demonstrable knowledge and experience of Capita or Northgate Revenues and Benefits systems.	Desirable	A, T, I

Relevant experience:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Legislation- Experience of assessing claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction and knowledge of welfare benefits.	Desirable	A, T, I, P, D

IT Skills - Experience of working with IT systems including Microsoft products and document imaging/workflow systems.	Essential	A, T, I

Education, training and work qualifications:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
English and Maths GCSE grade C or above / Proven literacy and numeracy skills	Essential	A, T, I, P, D
Experience of assessing claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction and knowledge of welfare benefits.	Desirable	A, T, I
IRRV Technician	Desirable	A, T, I

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.

Day-to-day in the role:

Hours:	37 hours per week	**Primary Work Base:**	One Angel Square
Job family and salary band:	Regulatory and Technical Band 06	**Worker type:**	Part-flexible
People management responsibility:	None	**Budget responsibility:**	None

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

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