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| **JOB DETAILS** |
| **Job Title** | Welfare Officer |
| **Service Area / Team** | Council Tax, Benefits & Welfare |
| **Pay Grade**  | Grade E |
| **Politically Restricted Post** | No  |
| **DBS Requirement**  | Basic  |

**Folkestone & Hythe District Council Job Description**

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| **JOB PURPOSE** |
| * To play a positive and significant role in the delivery of a welfare support, providing customers and officers with knowledge and support to ensure a smooth transition to the continued roll out of the changes in welfare provision.
* Research and fully understand the implications of the welfare reforms including Universal Credit for the Council and for customers; keeping up to date with all legislation relating to the welfare reform and liaise with service managers and senior officers to support the developing service.
* Ensure that procedural notes and guidance are accurate and up to date with relation to Universal Credit implementation and processing, including any other changes in welfare reform such as the benefit cap.
* To ensure that customers entitled to Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction receive prompt and accurate payment.
* To assist the Council Tax, Benefits & Welfare Manager and Team Leaders in delivering the objectives set out in the annual Service Plan, looking for continuous improvement in working practices, customer service, efficiency and value for money.
* To provide a comprehensive welfare benefits and advice service to Folkestone & Hythe District Council and its tenants with the aim of maximising their income and minimising rent arrears.
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| **MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| * Using detailed knowledge of welfare legislation, work directly with residents, by phone, email, letter and social media provide information and advice, guidance and assistance (including signposting as appropriate) with regard to:
	+ Income maximisation through the take up of appropriate benefits and return to work initiatives.
	+ Practical support to address debts and manage and budget their income.
* Contributing to work with new tenants at sign up to prevent rent arrears accruing and help sustain tenancies.

This may include in person at home (if required) but only in specialised circumstances. |
| * To lead and assist on the processing of applications for Financial Support Payments for customers struggling to pay their Council Tax.
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| * To ensure that procedural notes and guidance are accurate and up to date with relation to Financial Support Payment implementation and processing, including any other changes in welfare reform such as the benefit cap
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| * To work with the Council Tax, Benefits & Welfare Manager and Team Leaders to ensure that local partnership arrangements with the Department for Work and Pensions are maintained and the Council are kept up to date with any changes in welfare reform including Universal Credit.
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| * Using the most effective methods for the respective audiences, provide comprehensive and accurate advice on all aspects of welfare benefits to operational teams to make sure all staff are providing the latest information to customers.
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| * To ensure that responses and queries from the Universal Credit office are responded to appropriately, ensuring that the Council adhere to service level agreements with the Department for Work and Pensions
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| * To work with the Compliance & Development team in the assessment and awarding of Discretionary Housing Payments and the Financial Support Payments in relation to customers in receipt of Universal Credit or impacted by welfare reform
 |
| * Liaise with the wider Council Tax, Benefits and Welfare and Corporate Debt teams to ensure that Council Tax collection is maximised with regards to cases impacted by welfare reform such as Universal Credit. This may include assisting the team with collection of Council Tax Reduction cases including the implementation of section 13A discretionary relief.
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| * To handle meetings and telephone calls with our customers in a professional manner, placing the customer at the forefront of our service delivery by focusing on their needs.
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| * To take personal responsibility for managing your workload and have a flexible approach in assisting the department.
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| * To identify and refer irregularities of information to the designated Fraud Officer or to the relevant Manager for further investigation.
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| * Play a lead role in contacting hard to reach customers affected by welfare changes to ensure that benefit and support is maximised, this may involve partnership working with organisations such as Kent County Council, DWP and welfare support groups.
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| * To be available to assist customers with online support with relation to welfare reform.
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| * To maintain a prompt response to telephone, e-mail and written queries concerning specific cases raised by taxpayers, benefits claimants, landlords/housing associations and other outside bodies.
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| * To build strong and productive partnerships across the Council, with tenants and stakeholders.
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| * To demonstrate an on-going commitment to personal development by attending training courses as agreed with the Council Tax, Benefits & Welfare Manager and Team Leaders and completing E-Learning modules as required.
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| * To be proactive in identifying ideas that may improve service delivery to the Compliance & Development Officers such as testing and developing of new systems i.e. digital integration.
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| * To promote a positive team spirit by working well with other team members, sharing responsibility of common goals, understanding different roles and responsibilities, develop good working relationships across the council and to have respect for other team members.
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| * To share information, knowledge and best practice with other team members in order to promote an ethic of continual improvement within the team.
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| * Provide cover and support for other relevant posts within the Council Tax, Benefits and Welfare team.
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| * To assess and process applications for welfare support schemes operated by the Council.
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| * To liaise with neighbourhood officers to assist in supporting the settlement of or to reduce the debt as required.
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| * To work with other income recovery colleagues (Corporate Debt) to ensure that income collection is maximised, including building relationships with DWP and other agencies. This includes tenancy sustainment.
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| * To support residents, including FHDC housing tenants, with money and welfare advice as appropriate.
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| **CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES**  |
| * Adhere to the council’s safeguarding policies and procedures and undertake relevant training in order to help protect children and vulnerable adults within the district.
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| * To comply with legislation, council policies and procedures including the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Information Security Policy, the Code of Conduct for Officers and to participate in any Emergency Planning activities as required.
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| * To actively demonstrate the values and behaviours of the council.
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| * To ensure our customers are valued by taking into account their views and needs in all that we do.
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| * To contribute to the development and achievement of relevant corporate and service objectives by suggesting ideas for service improvements.
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| * To communicate openly and honestly with colleagues, members and customers.
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| * To undergo any training necessary to be able to fulfil the requirements of the job.
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| * To carry out other duties commensurate with the grade, skills, experience and qualifications of the post holder as directed and as may be required from time to time.
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**Folkestone & Hythe District Council Person Specification**

**Post Title: Welfare Officer**

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| **Important Information for Applicants:**The criteria listed in this person specification are the requirements for the post. Where the method of assessment is stated to be the application form, your application needs to demonstrate clearly and concisely how you meet each of the criteria, even if other methods of assessment are also shown. If you do not address these criteria fully, you may not be shortlisted. Please give specific examples wherever possible. |
| **Factors** | **Criteria** | **Means of Assessment** |
| Application | Interview | Test |
| **Qualifications** | **Essential** * A – C Maths and English GCSE, Level 2 literacy and numeracy (or equivalents), or recent and relevant experience that demonstrates proficiency in English and Maths
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| **Desirable** * Educated to A Level standard or equivalent
* NVQ Level 2/3 in Customer Service, Revenues or Benefits
* IRRV Award
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| **Experience and Knowledge** | **Essential** * Minimum of 2 years recent and relevant experience in either Revenues or Benefits
* Demonstrable detailed knowledge of Revenues and/or Benefits legislation and Universal Credit
* Experience of operating MS Office systems such as Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook
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| **Desirable*** An excellent working knowledge of Northgate systems and Civica
* Experience or competency in research and policy design/redesign
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| **Skills and Abilities** | **Essential** * Ability to work as part of a team effectively
* Ability to operate on own initiative with minimal supervision.
* Excellent communication skills.
* Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to build effective relationships at all levels.
* High level of attention to detail and accuracy.
* Competent user of IT, particularly Microsoft Office.
* Proactive and committed to continued service improvement. Ability to see and seize opportunities to develop and improve the service delivery and to motivate staff to secure those improvements.
* Committed to personal and professional development.
* Ability to adapt and proactively organise and prioritise work effectively in order to meet deadlines and maintain high standards at all times.
* Ability to demonstrate a professional and customer orientated approach.
* Excellent analytical skills and the ability to retain information.
* Ability to research, assimilate and explain complex information, including relevant legislation and its effect on specific cases.
* Commitment to data protection and maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
* Ability to work flexibly and encompass different disciplines for the benefit of wider council teams.
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| **Desirable**  |  |  |  |