



Benefits Officer

LEVEL: 7

ACCOUNTABLE TO: Benefits Team Leader

SALARY: £29,542 – £33,119 per annum

LOCATION: Totnes/Tavistock/Agile

CONTRACT: 2 year Fixed Term

Job Purpose

You will be part of a team responsible for all aspects of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support ensuring that you assess entitlement accurately and efficiently in accordance with legislation, best practice and Council policies and procedures.

You will provide an excellent service to our customers through providing advice, guidance and information to claimants, landlords and colleagues in writing, over the telephone and face to face.

Role Profile

- Assess applications for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support including reviewing evidence for correctness. As necessary, to seek additional information from claimants and third parties using the most efficient method of contact including written, telephone and face to face to accurately assess entitlement in accordance with legislation and local policies and procedures.
- Liaise with the Department for Work and Pensions, landlords and support agencies to obtain all information necessary to assess claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. Liaise with other departments in the Council, such as Housing, to advise on issues concerning claiming benefits and preventing homelessness.
- Ensure that any suspicions of irregular or fraudulent applications for benefits, discounts and exemptions are referred for further investigation.
- Notify claimants of decisions and ensure correct recording for audit and subsidy purposes.
- Responsible for ensuring your own workload is managed effectively and that data is input accurately to produce the correct benefit entitlement and maximise Housing Benefit Subsidy due to the Councils.
- Provide occasional support for the assessment of applications for Crisis and Resilience Fund Payments in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.



- Correctly determine amounts of overpaid Housing Benefit including whether overpayments are recoverable, the person liable for recovery and the most relevant recovery method in accordance with legislation, best practice and council policies and procedures.
- Process information and take ownership of any necessary follow up action as a result of telephone customer contact.
- Identify and support vulnerable customers, signposting to the Financial Advice and Support Team and other services where needed.
- Attend and engage with training and use all guidance and reference manuals to ensure that working knowledge is kept up to date and legislation, policies and procedures are applied accurately, and correct advice is given to customers.
- Provide ad-hoc support for projects to improve service delivery.
- To perform any other duties which fall within the broad spirit, scope, level and purpose of this role profile.

Person Specification

Qualifications

Essential	Desirable
Minimum 5 GCSEs or equivalent, including Maths and English, or equivalent work experience.	

Knowledge / Experience

Essential	Desirable
Good working knowledge of Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit legislation and best practice.	Knowledge of welfare benefits and their application.
Experience of assessing claims for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit.	Recent experience of using NEC and NECDM software.



Experience of using Revenues and Benefits software including an electronic document management system.	
Experience of dealing with customers, often in difficult circumstances.	

Skills / Abilities

Essential	Desirable
Excellent communication skills, both verbal and written.	Able to constructively challenge the way the service works and contribute new ideas.
Able to understand and apply complex and frequently changing legislation.	
Able to manage your own workload with a flexible approach to work both on your own and as part of a wider team.	
Able to prioritise, meet tight deadlines and performance targets and work effectively under pressure.	
Accuracy and attention to detail.	
Proactive approach to work and committed to providing excellent customer service.	
Able to cope with a high volume and pressurised environment where customers	



are often under a high degree of personal and/or financial stress.	
Able to explain complex decisions verbally and in writing to customers and colleagues, with the ability to adjust the style or nature as appropriate.	
Proficient in the use of ICT including Microsoft applications and specialist systems.	
An enquiring mind with the ability to identify inconsistencies in presented information and committed to preventing, detecting and deterring fraud.	

General / Other

Essential	Desirable
All staff must be prepared to have an understanding of the Equal Opportunities, Customer Care and Health and Safety policies.	
Standard DBS check to be completed on appointment.	

General

The list above is not exhaustive; this role profile sets out the duties of the post at the time it was drawn up. Such details may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the duties or the level of responsibility involved.



Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk

The Council has a Safeguarding Policy which outlines its responsibilities and the responsibilities of its employees. All employees need to be aware of this Policy and comply with the contents.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Council has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which outlines its commitment to creating a culture that respects and values each other's differences, promotes dignity, equality, diversity, and inclusion, encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential and combats prejudice, discrimination, and harassment.

Staff Code of Conduct

The public, our communities, customers, and colleagues are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all people working for the Councils. The Code of Conduct sets out the general standards of conduct expected of everyone working for the Councils.

Climate Change

Contribute to the Council's corporate objectives in relation to climate change by considering the environmental impact of individual and collective actions, working to reduce resource and energy use, minimise waste, and anticipate and enhance the efficiency of services in response to a changing climate, wherever possible, to help the council reduce its own carbon footprint and that of the district.