

Job Description



Job Title: Housing Benefit Recovery Officer	Service Area: Council Tax and Benefits	
Directorate/Team: Resident Experience	Post Number:	Evaluation Number: JE6421 (sc6) JE6421B (SO1)
Grade: Linked Sc6/SO1	Date last updated: November 2022	

People at the heart of everything we do

We are committed to putting people – Newham residents and Council staff – at the heart of all we do. Our approach is a collaborative joint enterprise between residents, the Mayor, Members, Council staff and the Corporate Management Team.

Equality and diversity

We are committed to and champion equality and diversity in all aspects of employment with the London Borough of Newham. All employees are expected to understand and promote our Equality and Diversity policy in the course of their work.

Protecting our staff and services

Adherence to health and safety requirements and proper risk management is required from all employees in so far as is relevant to their role. All employees are expected to understand and promote good health and safety practices and manage risks appropriately.

Corporate parent

We believe that every member of staff working for Newham Council should understand and fulfil our corporate parenting responsibilities for our looked after children that we have under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Overall Purpose of Job

To put the Council's vision into practice, providing services which reflect and meet the needs of the local community and to support the overall delivery of the Council Tax and Benefits service.

To account for and maximise recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments and collection of Council Tax and carry out all associated tasks in line with the Housing Benefit legislation and the Council's values.

Job Context

1. The post holder reports to a Council Tax and Benefits Team Manager.
2. The post holder will be expected to work across any of the service points within the service and remotely.
3. The post holder will work flexibly and work as an effective team member.

4. The post holder will be required to work some evenings, weekends and occasional public holidays in order to meet service requirements and in order to ensure appropriate representation of the Council with residents, the Mayor and elected members, and external bodies.
5. The post holder must adhere to the Council's dress code.

Key Tasks and Accountabilities:

Key tasks and accountabilities are intended to be a guide to the range and level of work expected of the post holder. This is not an exhaustive list of all tasks that may fall to the post holder and employees will be expected to carry out such other reasonable duties which may be required from time to time.

To undertake all responsibilities listed below:

Staff

1. To contribute towards the implementation of a working culture that is result-orientated and customer-focused.
2. To be responsible for continuous personal development by requesting support where and when necessary.
3. To liaise with the staff of all departments, external organisations or customer representatives and attend meetings.
4. To demonstrate a strong commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities.

Service Provision and Development

1. To maintain a high-level understanding of end-to-end customer interactions and to ensure appropriate levels of understanding throughout the designated service.
2. To handle difficult or sensitive enquiries effectively using the appropriate body language, critical, comprehensive and empathic listening skills and rapport building.
3. To understand what matters to customers, and to ensure appropriate levels of understanding throughout the staff delivering services.
4. To help support the delivery of continuous improvement within services, by responding to customer demand, reducing and eliminating "waste", and improving performance and efficiency.
5. To demonstrate alignment with the Council's vision, aims and values.
6. To be part of a virtual council wide resource supporting the corporate contact centre based on business need where requested or directed.

7.To give an appropriate level of information about and signposting to other council services to improve first contact resolution.

Administration, Finance and Performance

1. To uphold all of the Council's policies and procedures.
2. To adhere to all appropriate standards, procedures and quality management systems and participate in promoting innovative methods for improving service quality.
3. To operate within the agreed planning and performance review systems to deliver professional front office service which is relevant, high quality and protects customer confidentiality.

Overpayment recovery

The tasks and responsibilities at Scale 6 are:

1. To maintain a working knowledge of the Council's Overpayment policies and procedures and implement recovery of HB overpayments in accordance with them including proactive debt recovery actions comprising making decisions, negotiating settlement and preparing cases for County Court.
2. To have/maintain a good knowledge of associated regulations and keep fully up to date with regulation changes and Case law to deal with cases of Insolvency.
3. To use all internal and external information technology applications to interrogate these systems in order to trace debtors, to provide information, advice and support for customers and maintain accurate records.
4. Provide guidance, advice and support to service users about overpaid benefits and invoiced debts including advising customers of the reasons for the overpayment and basis for recovery action, advising customers of the recovery action and signposting to debt support advice
5. To identify vulnerable customers and signpost to relevant bodies in a timely manner.
6. To analyse information supplied by customers using income/expenditure or standard financial assessment forms to obtain a full understanding of the customer's needs and make decisions regarding affordable levels of repayments and the appropriate method of recovery.
7. Using the most efficient/effective means possible to communicate to customers and others to maximise recovery of overpayments.

8. To maintain effective liaison and partnership working with all internal and external stakeholders including Government departments and agencies dealing with enquiries, providing advice on specific procedures/legislation regarding the recovery of overpaid benefit and sharing information.
9. Comply with procedures to maintain an accurate database of all overpayment recovery and to monitor performance including write off action undertaken and update of customer records across all relevant systems.
10. To carry out all tasks relating to the management and recovery of Housing Benefit debt.
11. To carry out relevant tasks to enable the collection and recovery of Council Tax.
12. To identify and report fraud.
13. To gain, develop and maintain an understanding of the Council Tax and Housing Benefits legislation and Council Tax Reduction Scheme and regulatory frameworks.
14. To take the responsibility to make a good decision that is explained, accurate and rational, seeking appropriate help where needed.

The tasks and responsibilities including the above and below for SO1 are:

15. To maintain a comprehensive detailed knowledge of the legislation related to Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery.
16. Process difficult queries from customers by correspondence, telephone, and electronically, ensuring timely accurate, appropriate responses and suggesting remedial action where weaknesses in service delivery is identified.
17. Assist in supporting new staff when required .
18. To be aware of, understand and help develop system measures to determine whether the purpose of the service is being met in the most effective manner.
19. To record relevant data to assess service capability and performance.

Health & Safety & Council Policy (applies to all staff)

1. To comply with the Council's policies on Health & Safety.
2. To uphold and ensure compliance with all the Council's policies and procedures across the service, including customer complaints and Information Governance (including the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, the Freedom of Information Act, Caldicott Principles and related security and confidentiality policies and procedures) and to meet the Council's statutory responsibilities.

Personal Specification



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

The criteria listed in this Person Specification are all essential to the job. 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, or if we do not consider that you meet them, you will not be shortlisted. Please give specific examples wherever possible.

CRITERIA	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY We are committed to and champion equality and diversity in all aspects of employment with the London Borough of Newham. All employees are expected to understand and promote our Equality and Diversity Policy in the course of their work.	
PROTECTING OUR STAFF AND SERVICES Adherence to Health and Safety requirements and proper risk management is required from all employees in so far as is relevant to their role. All employees are expected to understand and promote good Health and Safety practices and manage risks appropriately.	
KNOWLEDGE: Detailed knowledge of Housing Benefit overpayment and recovery legislation. Good knowledge of Housing Benefit legislation and other welfare benefits. Understanding of GDPR, Freedom of Information and related security and confidentiality policies and procedures. Good knowledge of support services available to those in debt.	Application Form/Interview/Test Application Form/Interview/Test Interview Interview

For SO1 Comprehensive detailed knowledge of the legislation related to Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery.	Test/Interview
EXPERIENCE: Experience of dealing with overpayment recovery. Experience of collection of debt. Experience of working within a customer-focused front-line service. Experience of operating, updating and retrieving data from IT systems.	Application Form/Interview Application Form/Interview Application Form/Interview Application form
SKILLS AND ABILITIES: Ability to administer Housing Benefit overpayments and associated tasks. Excellent written and verbal communication skills for a broad range of audiences and the ability to ensure important and relevant messages are communicated regularly and at the appropriate level. Ability to use relevant I.T for all duties and ensure all information is accurately maintained. Ability to liaise effectively with all stakeholders. Ability to prioritise workload to effectively meet customer demand and effectively manage own time. Ability to deliver high quality, customer focused, value for money customer contact service. Sound problem-solving skills, and ability to quickly evaluate situations and initiate appropriate actions. Ability to actively participate at team	Interview/Test Application Form/Interview/Test Application Form/Interview/Test Interview Interview Interview Application form/Interview

and corporate meetings, sharing best practice and developing effective working relationships. Ability to work with minimal supervision. Possession of numerical skills to calculate overpayment balances/instalment plans manually Possess good negotiation and listening skills	Interview Interview Application form/ Test Interview
PERSONAL STYLE AND BEHAVIOUR: Ability to make well informed, timely, accurate decisions based on evidence, logic and reason. Ability to deal with cases from start to finish identifying where and when support is needed. Ability to interview Customers in a sensitive and patient manner, ask appropriate questions, demonstrate active listening skills and obtain appropriate information. Ability to work as part of a team and create a productive and harmonious working environment and to work with colleagues to ensure successful service outcomes. A demonstrable understanding of equal opportunities issues and commitment to achieving equality and opportunity in service delivery. A demonstrable understanding of providing high quality, inclusive services across the Council. Is aware of individual learning needs and own learning style, actively seeks appropriate development and actively engages in learning	Interview Interview Interview Interview Application Form/Interview Application Form/Interview Application Form/Interview

Ability to organise, prioritise and work to deadlines. For SO1 Ability to support and mentor staff	Application Form/Interview Interview
OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Willingness and ability to work occasional evenings and weekends to maintain service delivery. Basic DBS check	Application Form/Interview Yes