



ROLE PROFILE

Role Title:	Benefits Assessment Officer
Service:	Revenues and Benefits
Salary Band:	SH04
Location:	Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3HD
Reporting To:	Senior Benefits Officer/Benefits Manager

Role Purpose

To assist with the efficient and effective day to day delivery and supervise functions within the Benefits service including the assessment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Schemes, payments of Local Welfare Assistance and related Government Grants in respect of residents within the Surrey Heath local authority area.

The purpose is to assess Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support accurately and within performance deadlines. In addition, the role requires the resolution of customer enquiries both face to face and on the telephone.

This role forms part of a team providing an excellent customer-focused processing and information service facilitating knowledge of and access to the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support as well as providing advice and assistance with Universal Credit enquiries. Administering benefit applications, changes of circumstance and associated clerical work to ensure the accuracy of claims.

To ensure that benefit claims, payments and overpayments are dealt with efficiently, accurately and within local targets, minimising subsidy loss. Assist with the completion and submission of Central Government and other Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction scheme statistical returns.

Main Duties and Accountabilities

Knowledge and Expertise



- Work in accordance and alignment with all national legislation, discretionary powers, council standing orders, council policies and standards of conduct.
- The following policies must be understood in detail: safeguarding, risk assessment, information sharing, equalities and diversity and health and safety.
- Responsibility for making payments out to customers for Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction.
- To be fully knowledgeable and keep up to date regarding government initiatives relating to service delivery, Benefits legislation, working practices and their associated systems.
- Recognise, prevent, and minimise fraud both internally and externally by knowledge of fraud awareness issues and counter-fraud provisions to identify and prevent the payment of fraudulent claims, adopting procedures according to current policies.
- Deliver a high quality, enquiry, verification, and assessment in accordance with customer requirement, Council policy.
- Provide a professional customer enquiry resolution service to all Council customers in a timely and courteous way. Staff should take responsibility for obtaining all information necessary to process or resolve a query, only escalating it to others where this appropriate
- Maintain accurate computerised records of data collected in respect of the administration and payment of benefit applications, exercising discretion in relevant areas.
- Ability to process claims quickly and correctly in accordance with legislative requirements, to meet targets and specified performance deadlines and maintain any statistics and records needed to enable workloads and targets to be monitored.
- Maintain a thorough knowledge of current Housing Benefit and local Council Tax Support legislation and computer system enhancements to ensure assessments meet the 99% accuracy rate required. This includes complex areas such as benefit claims for the self-employed, students, persons from abroad, and backdating requests.
- Maintain knowledge of the functions, procedures and systems of the Council Tax, Housing and Homelessness, Pensions Service, Rent Service, HM Revenue and Customs, DWP including Universal Credit and other areas impacting on the assessment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support or where data is shared.
- Maintain a secure working environment at all times.
- Action incoming post in accordance with Service Level Agreements, ensuring highest levels of accuracy.



Relations with People (Internal and External)

Important Internal Relationships:

- Benefits Manager
- Revenues Manager / Recovery Team Leader
- Revenue Officers / Benefit Assessment Officers
- ICT
- Section 151 Officer
- Housing Department
- Family Support
- Contact Centre
- Corporate enforcement

Important External Relationships:

- Benefit applicants within Surrey Heath Borough Council
- HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- Valuation and Tribunal Service
- Partner Organisations e.g. Citizens Advice, Printers, Landlords
- Other Local Authorities
- The Benefits Directory
- External Audit

Creativity and Innovation

- To have a positive approach as part of a team providing a customer service.
- To assist the team in achieving all targets and performance indicators.
- To be a self-starter able to work with minimal supervision.
- Ability to effectively problem solve.
- Ability to create new and imaginative approaches to processes and systems.



Financial Accountability

- None

Impact upon the Organisation & the Community

- To provide the service in accordance with the Council's vision and core values
- Ability to represent the Council in a professional manner including liaison with Benefit recipients, Council Taxpayers, members, and the public.
- Ensure that targets and deadlines are met within the agreed timescales.
- Understanding of the key objectives of the authority and service

Management & Supervisory Responsibilities

- None

Initiative & Independent Action

- To have a positive approach as part of a team providing a customer service
- To assist the team in achieving all targets, performance indicators
- Ensure that targets and deadlines set are met within the agreed timescales.
- To be a self-starter able to work with minimal supervision.
- Ability to create new and imaginative approaches to processes and systems.
- To demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in the drive towards change and the improvement of processes.
- To develop and implement process improvements and encourage the use of technology to improve customer experience.
- Maintain a secure working environment at all times.

General



- To carry out any other clerical duties commensurate with the grade of post as directed by the Benefits Manager.
- To effectively contribute towards providing and improving the level of service that Revenues and Benefits provide to all customers, agencies, and partner organisations.
- To be able to deal in a professional, courteous, and firm way with customers and external clients both on the phone, by letter or in person.
- Attend and participate in departmental meetings as required, supporting colleagues, and sharing information appropriately.
- To promote a culture within the Service which is supportive of the Council's purpose, aims and values and to take all reasonable steps to maintain good employee relations.
- Participate in Council projects as and when necessary, e.g. involvement in service improvement or undertaking Customer satisfaction surveys and performance monitoring processes.
- Experience of assisting services in achieving their objectives
- Understanding of the key objectives of the authority and service
- Liaise with other professionals, establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure a high standard of service.
- Understanding and commitment to promoting and implementing the Council's Equal Opportunities policies
- Represent the service at meetings with stakeholders as required.
- Demonstrate willingness to attend and participate in an intensive training programme followed by ongoing continuous professional development.

Continuous Professional Development

- Ensure up to date knowledge of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and Universal Credit legislation and procedures.
- Stay up to date with Benefit legislation and procedures.
- Ensure value for money and continuously improve performance.
- Contribute to one-to-one, peer and group supervision.



Customers and Contacts

Important Internal Relationships

- Revenues Manager
- Benefits Manager
- Recovery Team Leader
- Revenues and Benefits Officers
- ICT
- Section 151 Officer
- Housing Department
- Contact Centre
- Corporate enforcement

Important External Relationships

- Benefit applicants within Surrey Heath Borough Council
- HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- Valuation and Tribunal Service
- Partner Organisations e.g. Citizens Advice, Printers, Landlords
- Other Local Authorities
- External Trainers (in respect of apprenticeship)
- NEC

DBS Requirements

- Standard Check



Qualifications and Training

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Qualified Member of the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation or Appropriate Qualification i.e. Level 3 or 4 in Revenues and Benefits Practitioner	D	Application
Detailed understanding of the legislation and statutory requirements affecting service delivery in the area of Housing Benefits.	D	Application
Excellent IT skills, including MS Office, Revenues systems, document management systems	E	Application
Excellent written and verbal communications	E	Interview

Knowledge and Experience

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Experience of working on an extensive and varied workload at a high level with a proven track record of success	E	Application and Interview
Demonstrate a deep understanding of the workings of local Government and the current and future issues to be faced along with the financial, legal, and	D	Application/Interview



political context of public sector management		
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Skills and Relations with People

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Experience of working in a Benefits environment	D	Application
Credible in personal and professional demeanour commanding the confidence of customers, members, other chief officers, staff, external partners, and other stakeholders	E	Application/Interview
Enthusiastic management style, able to encourage change, improvement, and loyalty	E	Interview/Assessment
Skills in negotiation	E	Interview/Assessment

Creativity and Innovation

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Able to analyse complex data and reach logical conclusions	E	Application/Interview/Assessment
Assist with the implementation of Government Grant initiatives, which do not fall	D	Application/Interview



in to an overall pattern and require conceptualization, implementation, and delivery.		
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Impact upon the Organisation and the Community

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
A full understanding of the impact of Housing Benefits and Council Tax Reduction in respect of low incomes households within the Borough	E	Interview/Assessment
Experience of successfully managing a Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction caseload.	E	Application
Experience of working with customers and external partners to show a proven track record of successful management of a Discretionary Housing Payment budget.	D	Interview
Encourage the use of technology to improve the service and customer experience.	E	Interview/Assessment

Initiative and Independent Action

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment



Knowledgeable of developments within IT within the sector and able to recognise and enable those to enable efficiency and development.	E	Interview
To be a self-starter able to work with minimal supervision	E	Interview
Ability to create new and imaginative approaches to processes and systems.	E	Interview

Additional Requirements

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Knowledge and experience of using IT	E	Application
Ensure compliance with Health and Safety at work, Data Protection, and other statutory requirements.	E	Application
To undertake any other temporary responsibilities aligned with the overall purpose and grade of the role	E	Interview/Assessment

DBS Requirements

- Standard Check

