

Post Specification

Post Specification - Key Information

- **Post Title: Benefits Team Leader**
- **Date: February 2025**
- **Post Group Number: 8492**
- **Job Family: Regulation and Technical**
- **Job Family Role Profile: RT10**
- **Final Grade: 10**

To be read in conjunction with the job family role profile.

Service Area Description

The Revenues and Benefits is a statutory service and sits within the Resources Directorate, specifically within the Finance service, and has responsibility responsible for the professional, timely and accurate collection, recovery and enforcement of monies due, and for the administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support to our residents.

The Revenues and Benefits service is responsible for the following key functions:

- Council Tax
- Business Rates
- Debt Recovery
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support
- Housing Benefit overpayment recovery

Housing Benefit broadly consists of:

- Rent allowances – private rented dwellings
- Rent rebates – Council owned dwellings
- Supported accommodation
- Temporary accommodation
- Subsidy claims submitted to the Department of Works & Pensions
- Discretionary Housing Payments

Council Tax Reduction broadly consists of:

- The provision of, and administration of local support in compliance with the Westmorland and Furness Council Tax Reduction scheme

Purpose of this Post

To support the Benefits Management Team in promoting and delivering a legislatively compliant, effective, and high-quality customer centric Benefits Service through the development and delivery of a range of functions and initiatives, including housing benefits, council tax support, discretionary housing payments, overpayment recovery and welfare benefits.

To manage a multifunctional Benefits Team, with responsibility for the operational and performance management, providing clear guidance and direction which promotes and develops a culture of continuous improvement, compliance and efficiency.

The Benefits Team Leader will provide technical knowledge and interpret appropriate legislation and regulations relating to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support to ensure a customer-orientated service is delivered to residents and landlords, including the accurate administration and assessment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.

They will ensure employees deliver the service in line with the Council's values, Ways of Working and Operating Model, taking a performance management approach, displaying positive behaviour, and will provide strong, effective resource management, playing a key role in the future transformation of the service.

The post holder will deputise for the Benefits Management Team when required and will work closely and collaboratively with the Revenues & Benefits Strategic Leads, and colleagues across Directorates.

Key Job Specific Accountabilities

- To be responsible for the organisation, and day to day management of benefit operations for the team, ensuring that all enquiries, tasks and changing priorities are successfully delivered
- To provide knowledge and interpret appropriate legislation and regulations relating all areas of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support to ensure a customer centric service is delivered to residents and service users in relation to the effective and accurate administration and assessment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support
- To lead in the development and manage additional mandatory DWP initiatives such as HBAA (Housing Benefit Accuracy Award), VEP (Verify Earnings & Pension), NFI (National Fraud Initiative) in accordance with DWP instructions to ensure all associated activities are completed appropriately
- To ensure maximum quality and accuracy of benefit administration is in place in order to protect the Council's financial standing and provide an excellent customer experience
- To ensure the prompt processing of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme awards, within local and national speed of processing targets
- To ensure that housing benefit overpayments are recovered in a timely and appropriate manner
- To prioritise and monitor workloads of the team, ensuring required tasks are undertaken and deadlines met
- To undertake quality checking, and deliver feedback on any errors and areas of praise, creating and maintaining a positive team morale and working environment where the team are supported and valued
- To maintain and utilise an up-to-date knowledge of benefits legislation and the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, software, Council policies, IT skills and administrative procedures.
- To assist with the training and development of staff and provide support, coaching and mentoring to members of the team
- To work closely with the Benefits Strategic Lead and Benefits Manager to identify areas of strengths and weakness and to implement a continuous improvement ethos
- To deal with, and advise customers and colleagues as required, in relation to more the complex and contentious cases, including reconsiderations, supported and temporary accommodation and complaints
- To assess, develop, direct, motivate and provide support to team e.g. flexi, absence management, performance management etc.
- To assist with the timely and accurate translation of new or revised legislation, policy, guidance and system changes into operational practice and process, ensuring a fully compliant service

- To represent the Council at meetings with stakeholders and partners, ensuring positive relationships are developed and maintained
- To provide cover for other managers within the Revenues and Benefits service area as required
- To undertake recruitment and selection within the Benefits team
- To analyse, interpret and report on management information as and when required
- To develop and maintain accurate records
- Undertake all other roles and tasks that are consistent with the level of this post, or that fall within the broad spirit or scope and purpose of the role supporting the professional delivery of the Benefits service in a timely and effective manner

Please note: Annual targets will be discussed during the appraisal process.

Key Facts and Figures of the Post

- **Budget Responsibilities:** No direct budget responsibility
- **Staff Management Responsibilities:** Supervise, motivate and recruit approximately 6 FTE Benefit Officers
- **Other:** The Revenues and Benefit Service has anchor buildings and teams are located in Barrow, Kendal and Penrith. The Benefits Team Leader will be required to travel across these sites.

Essential Criteria

- **Qualifications:**
 - Educated to a degree level or significant relevant experience in a Local Authority Benefits environment
- **Knowledge:**
 - Good standard of IT literacy in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook and Capita/Academy Revenues and Benefits software
 - Ability to operate in a complex and changing environment
 - Ability to monitor and manage performance, and analyse data and draw conclusions
 - Ability to support the delivery of transactional services to customers
 - Ability to plan and formulate own work activity with minimal supervision
 - Ability to effectively communicate to a range of levels in a variety of forms
 - Effective organisational and decision-making skills
 - Ability to work under pressure and to tight deadlines, enthusiasm, drive and commitment to achieving successful outcomes
 - Being proactive in finding best practice, guidance and innovative and creative solutions, and applying them to local circumstances
- **Experience:**
 - Proven ability to lead a team, including effectively manage performance, setting targets and dealing with issues as they arise
 - Experience in setting, maintaining and monitoring standards of accuracy, diligence and service delivery
 - Strong experience of working with a wide range of stakeholders
 - Evidence of developing and / or supporting partnerships and collaborating with Directorates
 - Evidence of managing significant change
- **Expertise:**
 - Extensive technical, legislative and specialist knowledge in a Benefits environment
 - Ability to deal with DHP's, appeals, supported and temporary accommodation applications, complaints, FOI's and Councillors correspondence etc.
 - To play a key role in the Revenues and Benefits service transformation programme.

Desirable Criteria

- IRRV qualification at Technician level or above or working towards
- Leadership qualification at Level 4 or above
- Experience of delivering innovative solutions to improve service delivery

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

- This post requires a DBS and a BPSS check
- The level of check required is:
 - DBS Basic

Job Working Circumstances

- **Emotional Demands:** Ability to manage the emotional demands of the role. The job involves dealing with some of the most vulnerable customers within our community.
- **Physical Demands:** Normal
- **Working Conditions:**
 - Although the job is generally office based, there will be some flexibility to work from home, subject to agreement by the line manager
 - There is also some physical need to move throughout office buildings and attend external meetings and training events with a variety of different organisations
 - To meet the duties of the post the job holder must be able to travel independently around the area
- **Other Factors:** This post is currently designated as a casual car user