

<b>Role Title</b>	<b>Principal Benefits Officer</b>
<b>Job Family</b>	<b>Resources – Revenue &amp; Benefits</b>
<b>Competency Level</b>	<b>Principal Officer - PO1</b>
<b>Pay Range / Scale</b>	<b>£41,133 to £43,680</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	
<p>To develop and deliver specialist support/advice for a defined service area.</p> <p>To ensure relevant legislation, regulations and policies are complied with.</p> <p>To monitor and allocate incoming work and to provide training and day-to-day guidance to team members and make recommendations for changes to policies and procedures to improve and enhance customer experience.</p> <p>To accurately process applications and referrals in defined service areas.</p> <p>To assist with managing a team in the absence of the Team Manager.</p>	
<b>Generic Accountabilities</b>	<b>End Results/ Outcomes</b>
<p>Provide advice and make recommendations based on up-to-date knowledge and analysis / evaluation of information.</p> <p>Manage escalated or complex customer issues within the relevant area.</p>	<p>Expert advice, information, interpretation, and support are provided on the full range of technical / professional issues within the area of responsibility.</p> <p>Issues are managed to a satisfactory conclusion.</p> <p>Risk to the Council is minimised.</p>
<p>Contribute to the development of service plans to meet strategic business goals.</p>	<p>Strategic and operational input is provided to wider business planning and development.</p> <p>Customer needs are identified.</p> <p>Services meet legislative and policy requirements.</p>
<p>Research developments in relevant area. Collate process and analyse information / data. Translate outputs into advisory reports / documents / actions as appropriate.</p>	<p>Relevant information / data are managed efficiently and accurately.</p> <p>Accurate and relevant information / reports / documentation are produced.</p> <p>Trends and issues are identified and prioritised.</p> <p>Statutory and procedural obligations are fulfilled.</p> <p>Management decision making is supported.</p>
<p>Lead on the development,</p>	<p>Changes to systems, policies and / or procedures are</p>

<p>implementation, maintenance and management of systems, policies, procedures and / or standards within area of responsibility.</p>	<p>identified and recommended.</p> <p>All updates, amendments, developments are tested and approved prior to delivery.</p> <p>Customers receive prompt, accurate policy / procedural updates.</p> <p>Service standards are improved.</p>
<p>Work closely with others to support/Manage the development and delivery of improvements in processes and procedures.</p>	<p>Identifies gaps in service provision/highlight policy issues and makes recommendations to resolve the issues.</p> <p>Agreed improvements are developed, delivered and evaluated.</p> <p>Issues and recommendations are brought to the attention of senior managers.</p> <p>Benchmark against best practice authorities and center of excellence.</p>
<p>Prepare and present a full range of reports (both standard and non-standard) covering area of responsibility.</p>	<p>Reports are prepared, distributed / presented to the appropriate committee/ to the required standards and timescales.</p> <p>Evidence-based recommendations are made.</p>
<p>Manage a portfolio of Projects and Reviews.</p> <p>Lead on specific projects as required.</p>	<p>Projects are delivered to agreed specifications, timescales and budgets.</p> <p>Change initiatives are successfully integrated and implemented across all impacted service areas.</p> <p>Value for money is achieved.</p> <p>Ongoing savings secured.</p>
<p>Co-operate with and support colleagues.</p>	<p>Colleagues are supported.</p> <p>Required information is provided.</p>
<p>Act in accordance with all policies and procedures which apply to the job and understand the reasons for this.</p>	<p>All policies and procedures are complied with.</p>
<p>Carry out all duties and responsibilities with reasonable care for the health and safety of self and others and report any potential hazards or unsafe</p>	<p>Work is carried out in a way that is safe and without risks to health.</p>

practices to line manager.	
<b>Job Specific Accountabilities:</b>	
<p>Assist with the development and implementation of different and emerging digital and technological solutions within area of responsibility</p>	<p>Campaigns to increase e-notifications are run regularly.</p> <p>New areas for automation identified and recommended to team managers. Agreed processes implemented, tested, and approved as directed.</p> <p>Robotic accuracy checking undertaken and exceptions levels monitored and reduced with the resulting increased resource availability monitored and discussed with the team manager.</p> <p>New workflow documents and processes identified, recommended, and agreed changes are introduced to identify priority work. New online web forms recommended and introduced when approved.</p> <p>Increased use of auto-indexing including e-mails.</p> <p>New Letter templates identified and drafted and submitted to the team manager for approval.</p>
<p>Make prompt and accurate awards of: Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Financial Assessments, Free School Meals and All discretionary schemes administered within the service including those introduced within LWA provisions.</p>	<p>Accurate awards of benefit and discretionary schemes are made including updating Council Tax liability and applying single person discount where appropriate.</p> <p>Possible fraudulent cases identified and referred to the relevant fraud team.</p> <p>Reported changes of circumstances are processed promptly with particular attention to reduction in entitlement to minimise LA error overpayments subsidy loss.</p> <p>Performance targets consistently met across all areas.</p>

	<p>Creditors set up where applicable including Landlord creditors for the team.</p> <p>Debtor references set up where appropriate on Financial Assessment cases</p> <p>Internal and external auditors supported with viewing and extracting relevant system information.</p>
<p>Work allocated and monitored to achieve service targets</p>	<p>Support and assistance provided to the team manager in the area of responsibility and management of the team.</p> <p>Urgent work involving complaints and members' enquiries monitored and allocated to the team.</p> <p>First Stage appeal replies for Financial Assessments are written and assigned to Head of Service for review and sign off.</p> <p>Reports run regularly and performance issues identified and reported to the team manager for appropriate action.</p> <p>Work processes within work area reviewed and improved appropriately with the team managers agreement. Web form customer comments are regularly analysed and suggested improvements provided to the team manager.</p> <p>Deputise for the Benefits Team Manager when necessary.</p>
<p>Assist with procurement, monitoring resilience contracts and SLAs</p>	<p>Assist with the procurement of contracts for goods and services for the discretionary schemes including new government schemes introduced through Local Welfare Reform.</p> <p>Resilience contracts are monitored by regularly running accuracy and performance reports and issues identified presented to the team manager.</p> <p>Resilience contract accuracy checking monitored, and reports presented to the team manager with issues identified.</p> <p>Assist with drafting and monitoring of service level agreements across the council such as with Housing, Caller Centre, or Indexing Team etc.</p>
<p>Minimise losses to the Council's benefits subsidy</p>	<p>Pending and Accuracy checking undertaken, paying attention to high-risk potential subsidy loss areas and the caseload accuracy is maintained or improved.</p>

	<p>Subsidy workbook queries are responded to, for area of responsibility. Subsidy issues brought to the attention of the team manager within area of responsibility.</p>
<p>Collection and recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments and Sundry Debt collection.</p>	<p>Cases identified and accounts referred for correct debt recovery action such as Enforcement agents, debt collection, court action or charging orders to be placed on owned properties.</p> <p>Other methods of recovery for Housing Benefit debt used to recover debts quickly such as blameless tenant recovery from landlords, offsetting credits and recovery from rent accounts.</p> <p>Enforcement agent schedules regularly, checked for activity undertaken and Enforcement Agent review meetings arranged and attended.</p> <p>Assist with the overall reduction in the outstanding Housing Benefit overpayment by managing and reducing the Landlord debt, unallocated credits and identifying high level debts for alternative recovery options.</p> <p>Assist with the overall reduction in the outstanding Sundry Debts by collection, referring to relevant team for next action, which may include write off or legal action.</p> <p>Debtors vulnerability identified, with unrecoverable and uneconomical debts recommended for write off and documented to meet Audit and internal requirements.</p> <p>Housing Benefit debts identified as official error overpayments are reclassified correctly and removed from the outstanding debt balance.</p> <p>Approved write-offs are processed or authorised in accordance with authorisation limits.</p>

<p>Manage, coordinate and deliver training in the use of IT systems, legislation, internal policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Staff inductions are managed and delivered.</p> <p>System, legislation and policy and procedure training delivered across the service.</p> <p>Feedback and training/workshops provided to colleagues based on individual and team errors.</p>
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	<p>Recommendations made and training packages created for area of responsibility and delivered across the service in response to subsidy errors.</p>
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**Nature of Contacts**

Typically involves Heads of Service, and Senior Managers across the authority, and external agencies and organisations providing advice.

May involve direct contact with members of the public.

Develop sensitivity, persuasiveness, and negotiation and assertiveness skills to communicate with diverse audiences in emotive circumstances.

Deal with people at all levels confidently, sensitively, and diplomatically.

May involve direct contact with:

1. Landlords, Housing Associations, Housing Department in their capacity as a landlord and other functions such as Housing welfare rights advisors, Temporary accommodation providers.
2. Other government bodies such as Department for Work and Pensions, HMRC, Home Office, Office of Public Guardian.
3. Other Waltham Forest departments such Financial Deputy, Care Leavers, Families, Adult Social Care and Audit and Fraud.
4. Housing Benefit Overpayment and Debt Recovery Team will involve contact with enforcement agents, Revenues Court Officers, solicitors

Provide specialist advice, guidance, and support on issues within area of responsibility; develop and maintain joint working and promote the Council position. Consult with stakeholders to identify requirements. Communicate changes in policy and working practice to contacts.

<b>Procedural Context</b>
<p><b>Reports to Benefits Team Manager</b></p> <p>Act in accordance with statutory requirements, case law and local policies and procedures.</p> <p>Act within guidelines and standard procedures with discretion to allocate or otherwise organise work to meet service delivery requirements. Works within laid down procedures but needs to deal with day-to-day problems without always referring to others.</p> <p>To deal with more complex cases, making decisions through knowledge/referral to relevant legislation and case law.</p>
<p>Plans own time and co-ordinates the work of others with the team manager.</p> <p>Plans, organises and deliver interventions and actions. Responsible for professional advice, assessments, or referrals.</p> <p>Deal with day-to-day problems without always referring to others.</p> <p>Provide support to the team, customers, colleagues, and other stakeholders through applying knowledge of systems, procedures, and best practice.</p> <p>Use initiative to deal with complex issues and respond appropriately in an unpredictable work environment.</p> <p>This post demands a high level of flexibility, a positive attitude and ability to adapt to changes due to service needs.</p> <p>This post is office based, with homeworking available.</p> <p>Occasionally the postholder will be expected to work from other locations, attend court or conduct home visits.</p>
<b>Key Facts and Figures</b>
<b>Resourcing</b>
<p>Budget Responsibilities: <b>nil</b></p> <p>Supervisory Responsibilities: <b>nil</b></p>

## **Knowledge, Skills and Experience**

### **Knowledge**

- Housing and Council Tax Benefits/Support legislation, understanding of Housing Benefit overpayment legislation including recovery options and processes as well as having a working knowledge of other welfare benefits
- Free School Meals and Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments and an understanding of Discretionary Council Tax Hardship or Section 13A legislation
- A document management system and a core processing system used for Benefits
- Adult Social Care Financial Assessment and associated processing systems

### **Specific Experience:**

- A total of at least two years' experience in one or more of the following;
  - Assessing all types of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims and making accurate decisions in relation to benefit entitlement.
  - Interpreting Housing and Council Tax Support legislation and conveying this to others in a clear and concise manner.
  - Using a computerised benefits calculation system and analysing complex information and resolving problems.
  - Using a computerised system for the recovery and enforcement of debt, including but not limited to Housing Benefit overpayments.
  - Determining all types of Adult Social Care financial assessments, in line with appropriate legislation and policy.

### **Experience other:**

- Experience of giving advice on complex issues to team members.
- Relevant legislative and or procedural knowledge for specialist area.
- Experience of having worked in a fast paced, customer focused environment.
- Excellent knowledge and application of IT systems and software packages.
- Relevant legislative and or procedural knowledge for specialist area.
- Presenting written and verbal communication in a clear, concise, and accurate
- Prioritising workloads
- Dealing with difficult or irate customers face-to-face and /or on the phone

### **Skills:**

- Ability to work with minimum supervision, using problem solving skills and initiative to provide a customer focused support service.
- Excellent levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Ability to work flexibly, balancing competing priorities and meeting deadlines whilst understanding the needs, timescales and deadlines of others.
- Ability to deal diplomatically and confidentially with a wider range of stakeholders internally and externally.
- Ability to identify improvements to processes and systems and to share the recommendations with the wider team.
- Be a team player and to work collaboratively with others.
- Identify and recommend changes to working practices to increase performance.
- Quickly assimilate and interpret complex legislation.
- Identify training needs and assist in the provision of training.
- Produce, collate and analyse statistical information as required.

### **Indicative Qualifications**

Degree or equivalent or vocational qualification in relevant subject or area  
 Evidence of Continuous Professional Development

The above profile is intended to describe the general nature and level of work performed by employees in this role. It is not intended to be a detailed list of all duties and responsibilities which may be required. This role profile will be supplemented and further defined by annual objectives, which will be developed in conjunction with the post holder. It will be subject to regular review, and the Council reserves the right to amend or add to the accountabilities listed.