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| **Job Description** | |
| **Post title** | Financial Assessments and Benefit Officer |
| **JE Reference No** | N9455 |
| **Grade** | Grade 7 |
| **Service** | Resources |
| **Service Area** | Finance & Transactional Services - Assessment and Awards |
| **Reporting to** | Principal Financial Assessment Officer |
| **Location** | Your normal place of work will be Green Lane, Spennymoor, but you may be required to work at any Council workplace within County Durham. |
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| **DBS** | This post is subject to an Enhanced Disclosure |
| **Flexitime** | This post iseligible for flexitime. |
| **Politically restricted** | This post is not designated as a politically restricted post in accordance with the requirements of Section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and by regulations made from time to time by the Secretary of State. |

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| **Description of role** |

Providing a quality safe and cost effective service to customers, including the provision of first line contact and prompt and efficient handling of any queries or problems

To assess Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, and Welfare Assistance in accordance with legislation, case law, and the working practices and procedures of the council to the required standards of accuracy and achieving agreed clearance times as laid out in the Service plan.

To assess customers individual level of charging for the provision of Adult Social Care in accordance with legislation, case law, and the working practices and procedures of the Council to the required standards of accuracy and achieving agreed clearance times as laid out in the Service plan.

Managing service user finance where Appointeeship and Deputyship has been taken on by the Council.

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| **Duties and responsibilities** |

Listed below are the responsibilities this role will be primarily responsible for:

* Supporting and assisting the Principal/Senior Finance Officer in the day-to-day provision of the Assessment and Award service, in accordance with Council Policies and all relevant Regulations.
* To be responsible for processing all work allocated to them by the Principal/Senior Finance Officer, in accordance with the Services performance indicators and office procedures
* To be conversant and maintain a good working knowledge of all legislation, procedures and working practices relating to all Welfare Benefits including Housing Benefits and Durham County Council’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
* To be conversant and maintain a good working knowledge of the Councils discretionary welfare schemes including the Discretionary Housing Benefit Policy and the Welfare Assistance Scheme, policy and working practices. Including the collation of information to enable their safe, secure and accurate decision making process in the award of emergency daily Living Awards and Settlement Grants.
* To be conversant and maintain a good working knowledge of all legislation, procedures and working practices the Councils Adult Social Care Charging policies.
* To manage service user finances where Appointee and Deputyship has been taken on by the Council, including maximising service users’ income through welfare benefit and investment of assets, protection of property and carrying out regular financial inspections on household and service user’s financial records. Ensure purchases to maintain quality living.
* Provide a customer orientated service and carrying Assessment and Awards functions in line with Value for Money principals.
* The collation of information to assist in the decision making process of benefit entitlement and the safe, secure and accurate billing ensuring customers receive all benefits, discounts and reliefs they are entitled to.
* The safe, secure and accurate calculation of entitlement to Adult Social Care Charging, Welfare Benefits including Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction Councils discretionary policies and schemes, including Discretionary Housing Benefit and Welfare Assistance, ensuring compliance with legislation and procedures.
* Communication with the Council’s customers, whether in person, by telephone or in writing, at the Council’s offices, at the customers home, or at other relevant premises in order to collate information to assist in the decision making process.
* The notification to customers of the results of their applications and charges and any subsequent changes that affect their awards or payments.
* To visit customers in their homes or in other locations to assist them in applying for reduced charges, benefit, reduction or discount and to check for relevant documentation to support their application and assist with the maximisation of income for both them and the Council.
* Protect vulnerable customers through the application of the Council’s Discretionary Housing Payment Policy, Welfare Assistance Policy, Charging Policies, Safeguard policies and Debt Management Strategy ensuring that customers have all benefits, discounts and reliefs that they are entitled to.
* Maximise income for the Council through the reassessment of service users’ charges following changes in benefits and or service users circumstances.
* Maximise income for the Customer through the identification and appropriate application of Welfare Benefits and Council’s discretionary schemes.
* To give accurate advice to customers, at first line contact provides a prompt and efficient handling of any queries or problems including providing explanation of how a bill or benefit has been calculated.
* To liaise, as required, with internal services and external partners including Government Departments and Agencies, social work staff and providers of social care services.
* To provide support or mentoring to colleagues and partners as required.
* Working with the minimum of supervision to achieve high levels of performance for the Assessment and Awards service.
* The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by the Head of Service.

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| **Organisational responsibilities** |

* **Values and behaviours**

To demonstrate and be a role model for the council’s values and behaviours to promote and encourage positive behaviours, enhancing the quality and integrity of the services we provide.

* **Smarter working, transformation and design principles**

To seek new and innovative ideas to work smarter, irrespective of job role, and to be creative, innovative and empowered. Understand the operational impact of transformational change and service design principles to support new ways of working and to meet customer needs.

* **Communication**

To communicate effectively with our customers, managers, peers and partners and to work collaboratively to provide the best possible public service. Communication between teams, services and partner organisations is imperative in providing the best possible service to our public.

* **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

To take responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing in accordance with the council’s Health and Safety policy and procedures.

* **Equality and diversity**

To promote a society that gives everyone an equal chance to learn, work and live, free from discrimination and prejudice and ensure our commitment is put into practice. All employees are responsible for eliminating unfair and unlawful discrimination in everything that they do.

* **Confidentiality**

To work in a way that does not divulge personal and/or confidential information and follow the council’s policies and procedures in relation to data protection and security of information.

* **Climate Change**

To contribute to our corporate responsibility in relation to climate change by considering and limiting the carbon impact of activities during the course of your work, wherever possible.

* **Performance management**

To promote a culture whereby performance management is ingrained and the highest of standards and performance are achieved by all. Contribute to the council’s Performance and Development Review processes to ensure continuous learning and improvement and to increase organisational performance.

* **Quality assurance (for applicable posts)**

To set, monitor and evaluate standards at individual, team and service level so that the highest standards of service are delivered and maintained. Use data, where appropriate, to enhance the quality of service provision and support decision making processes.

* **Management and leadership (for applicable posts)**

To provide vision and leadership to inspire and empower all employees so they can reach their full potential and contribute to the council’s values and behaviours. Managers and leaders must engage in personal development to ensure they are equipped to lead transformational change; always searching for better ways to do things differently to meet organisational changes and service priorities.

* **Financial management (for applicable posts)**

To manage a designated budget, ensuring that the service achieves value for money in all circumstances through the monitoring of expenditure and the early identification of any financial irregularity.

*The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by your manager.*

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| Person specification | | |
|  | Essential | Desirable |
| Qualifications | * NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration or recognised professional administrative qualification |  |
| Experience | * Broad experience in an administrative / financial setting * Use of IT systems | * Experience in a Local Government setting |
| Skills & Knowledge | * Can apply numeracy and literacy skills in the workplace * Can use full range of communication skills * Able to cope with pressure * Able to manage time effectively * Able to make decisions and be assertive when appropriate * Able to act promptly in difficult/urgent situations * Use initiative to resolve problems * Good IT skills | * Can apply new knowledge and skills in the work place * Can use open questions and listen actively * Respond quickly to phone calls and messages and pass on information promptly to colleagues * Support/mentor team members involved in professional development |
| Personal Qualities | * Puts users of your service first * Flexible attitude to work * Understands and respects confidentiality * Openness to new ideas and ways of working * Self motivated * Team Player * Enthusiastic |  |