**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

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| **JOB TITLE:** | Senior Benefit Officer | **GRADE:** | GR4 |
| **DIRECTORATE:**  | Digital and Customer Services, Council Management Directorate | **DIVISION:** | Revenues and Benefits |
| **DEPARTMENT:** | Benefits  |  |  |

**JOB PURPOSE**

1. To administer Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit including the collection of overpayments and where appropriate to apply specific Benefit knowledge and technical expertise ensuring that all claims and recovery of overpayments are dealt with efficiently and effectively in accordance with the appropriate legislation, office procedures and the departments performance objectives. Will also be required to assist in the supervision of staff as necessary.

**Duties & Responsibilities**

1. To collate and report weekly statistical returns on work-position as appropriate.
2. To identify potential fraudulent claims and refer to Benefit Counter Fraud Team.
3. To assess claims and where appropriate to apply specific benefit regulations and expertise e.g. self-employed, students, habitual residence, persons from abroad etc:
4. Obtain information and validate claims as necessary by use of the telephone, letters and memoranda.
5. Be responsible for identifying and paying the appropriate indicative rent level, determining the eligible rent for rent allowance and referring through the Rent Officer Service and process Rent Officer Decision as appropriate.
6. Be responsible for processing and authorising payment of new claims, renewals and change of circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit including identification and collection of overpayments where technical expertise is required in accordance with appropriate legislation, office procedures and the departments performance objectives.
7. To make decisions on the recovery of debt, the method of recovery and the rate of recovery.
8. To act as an independent officer in considering and making appropriate decisions in line with the internal review process.
9. To vet all cases prior to referral to the Tribunal Appeals Service.
10. To authorise ‘write offs’ as appropriate in accordance with agreed procedures.
11. To act as the Service’s resource in terms of expertise on one or more specific area of practice/procedure e.g. administration orders; Glamis.
12. To prepare cases and authorise payment in respect of claims for backdated benefit and Discretionary Housing Payment.
13. To reply as necessary to Solicitor, Councillor, MP’s and Ombudsman cases.
14. To deal with and answer enquiries including those via the telephone received from members of staff, the public and from internal and external organisations.
15. To conduct accuracy checks in accordance with office procedure on payments of benefit entitlement.
16. To work to achieving work plan targets and performance indicators, providing statistical returns as required.
17. To liaise with the Department for Work and Pension, Rent Service and other Council Departments and external bodies as required.
18. To participate as a member of interview panels for the purposes of recruitment and selection of staff on a voluntary basis.
19. To interrogate and extract information from other City Computer Systems e.g. Housing Department and Council Tax.
20. To visit claimants as necessary including in their own homes.
21. To assist in the production of new working procedures and updating existing ones where necessary.
22. To assist in the supervision of staff including allocation and monitoring of work via the Document Management System.
23. To maintain weekly staff attendance records – where necessary.
24. To undertake ‘surgeries’ at Neighbourhood Offices as required.
25. To apply City Council and Department policies, including Customer Focus, Equal Opportunities and Anti-Poverty.
26. Follow safe working practices and assist in the maintenance of good housekeeping standards in order to achieve a safe and healthy working environment.

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| **Title of post to which this normally reports:** | Team Manager |
| **Staff supervised:** | Will assist in the supervision of a team of staff varying in number dependant upon workloads and area. |
| **Special Conditions:** | Where the situation demands and, subject to the appropriate consultation, you may be transferred to other duties commensurate with your grade, ability and experienceMay be expected to work out of office hours. |

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**RESOURCES DIRECTORATE**

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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|  | **ESSENTIAL** | **METHOD OF ASSESSMENT** |
| **EXPERIENCE** | At least 18 months experience of working in a Benefit ServiceGeneral knowledge of most aspects of Benefit Legislation and Regulations including detailed working knowledge of at least one specific area e.g. Hostels, Overpayments, Students, Self Employed, Backdating, DHP.Preparation of detailed written work, specifically letters to solicitors, councillors and MP’s, claimants, and/or case analysis reports. | **AF****AF/I/T****AF/I/T** |
| **SKILLS AND ABILITIES** | To have good verbal and written communication skillsTo be able to prioritise tasks and meet deadlines.To possess good numeracy skillsTo be able to update and interrogate a number of different computer applications and databases. To be able to work accuratelyTo be aware of the impact of Equal Opportunities and Anti-Poverty and to support existing Council policiesTo be able to deal with members of the public in person and via the telephoneTo liaise with other Departments and external agenciesAbility to operate within a team environmentAllocation of work to others and monitoring performance Ability to work from other locations | **AF/I/T****AF/I****AF/I/T****AF/I/T****AF/I/T****AF/I****AF/I****AF/I****AF/I****I****I** |
| **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT** | To be willing to undertake training as appropriate | **I** |
| **OTHER** | To be prepared to visit customers outside the office | **I** |

**Method of Assessment**

AF = Application form I = Interview T = Test