



South Kesteven Job Description

Job title:	Benefits Officer		
Salary:	Up to SK8 (currently £21,939)	Contract:	18 month fixed term contract
Hours:	Working hours will be 37 hours per week. <i>Week by week arrangements will be in accordance with business requirements and by agreement, subject to your right not to work more than 48 hours per week unless by agreement.</i>		
Location:	Council Offices, St Peters Hill, Grantham	Political restriction:	This job is not politically restricted

1 Overall purpose

To work under the direction of the Benefits Co-ordinators to make timely and accurate assessments of entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.

To award entitlement to Housing Benefits/Council Tax Support where appropriate, ensuring that payments are made promptly and in accordance with Government guidelines and Departmental procedures. This will involve contact with claimants calling in person, face to face, by telephone and by correspondence.

2 Responsibilities and outcomes

1. Ensure that Housing Benefits and Council Tax Support claims are assessed correctly and accurately. Ensure that an adequate and correct record of action has been taken

- Carry out the assessment of benefit claims in accordance with current legislation and in line with the standards laid down by the Department of Works and Pensions, as adopted by the Council and taking into consideration all changes arising from the Government's Welfare Reforms.
- Carry out all ancillary activities associated with the benefit claim process. These duties include advising and assisting claimants via the use of the telephone or in person on the Benefits Enquiry desk(s), with an emphasis on the "Customer First" ethos. This may involve working, as directed, from time to time at another location within the Council's area.
- To assist in the completion of new benefit claim forms, verifying supporting documents and cross-checking information provided to determine the evidence necessary for the assessment and award of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.
- Close working with council tax officers to ensure errors in council tax support are minimised, by ensuring that all data input is correct to meet Departmental accuracy targets.
- Terminate Benefit entitlement promptly on all relevant claims in line with Department of Work and Pensions notifications and other sources of information.
- Ensure that an adequate and correct record of action has been taken
- Gather and help maintain claim records and evidence to support the benefit award decision, in accordance with general DWP guidance and office procedures.

- Achieve a high level of accuracy in cases being assessed for which the calculation of the awarded benefit amount is correct.
 - Ensure database is revised as new information gathered, accurately and timely
 - Work with other officers to maintain accurate and up to date benefit records to ensure that the benefits information held on file and in the benefits system in relation to household composition correctly matches information held within the Council Tax system.
 - Work to help maintain processes and procedures within the benefits office in relation to financial matters and overpayment recovery.
 - To identify overpayments of Housing Benefit and undertake initial recovery action as appropriate
 - To undertake accurate assessments of Housing Benefit, identifying correct subsidy classifications
 - Ensure billing of council tax is correct and accurate.
 - Ensure relevant information is shared with the council tax officers thereby assisting in the council tax billing process, to enable the authority to bill promptly and accurately
 - Ensure own knowledge of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support is sufficient to undertake all related duties.
 - Develop and maintain a good level of knowledge and understanding of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support legislation to ensure that assessment work is carried out to the standards required.
 - This will involve undertaking internal and external training, reading, and understanding benefit circulars and bulletins, and implemented changes to procedures and office processes including the use of new technology as required for the purposes of the post holder's duties and responsibilities.
 - In addition, there will be a need to keep up to date with legislation relating to Housing Benefit Administration and Welfare Reforms.
 - Ensure the Council's Data Protection procedures and policy are fully adhered to.
 - NOT to disclose, without prior authority so to do, to any member of the public or authorised source, confidential or personal information about the Council's work or any individual or group obtained whilst the post holder is carrying out his/her duties.
 - Liaise with other teams, sections, departments, and outside bodies to enable the team to carry out its commitment to customers and the wider Council.
 - Deal with all customers in a polite and professional manner, providing accurate advice by telephone, letter, and face to face enquiries.
 - Support as necessary the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments and other grants which may be announced by Government
2. Liaise with customers, internal teams, and outside agencies:
- Liaise with members of the public by telephone, correspondence and face to face as required
 - To respond appropriately to correspondence, enquiries, and letters
 - Work closely with the Revenues Team to provide a wholistic service for the customer
3. Undertake any other responsibilities aligned with the overall purpose and grade of the role

3 Values and Behaviours

At SKDC we are building an organisation with a strong internal culture, within our Corporate Strategy we have a definite set of ideas, ways of doing business and values and behaviours. We believe that how you behave does matter, therefore, we believe that our values are just as important as skills.

Accountability – In order to succeed we will need a culture of accountability throughout SKDC. Everyone at every level will need to be responsible for what they do; willingly taking ownership for their actions and decisions and being a reliable, dependable member of the team, often going beyond the normal terms of employment. We cannot work flexibly without accountability.

Flexibility – We can't be set in our ways if we are going to succeed, so flexibility matters. It might be flexibility in terms of the hours you do, the way you work or where you work. We can't afford to do things the same way just because "that's the way it's always been done". Our performance will be measured in outcomes and those outcomes will contribute to achieving our strategy.

Agility – Related to flexibility is agility. SKDC’s needs are going to change over time and we need people who can respond to those changes, who can move freely between teams and who want to stretch themselves by being trained to be better at more things.

Equity – Every member of the SKDC team matters, irrespective of their rank or position. All of us should expect to be treated with respect and dignity and doors should be open. We will all be held to account for this.

Networking – We learn from each other and from external partners, so we need to be better at networking. Our networks hold the key to raising our profile, improving our performance, discovering better ideas and developing ourselves.

Learning – We are constantly learning from everything we do, regardless of success or failure. When we do something well, that knowledge can help us repeat and refine what we do in the future. We clearly won’t seek failure, but neither will we be frightened of it. And if we fail, we will learn from it and not seek to just apportion blame (see ‘accountability’ above).

Talent – Having a diverse and talented team is fundamental to our success. However, a person’s real talent isn’t always obvious; sometimes it’s overlooked, other times it may be hidden. Sometimes it’s a talent the person didn’t realise they had.

4 Flexibility

Some flexibility in the working hours will be required from time to time. This job description is not intended to be exhaustive. The post holder will be expected to adopt a flexible attitude to duties which may have to be varied (after discussion with the post holder) subject to the changing needs of the organisation.

5 Authority to work in the UK

You must have the legal authority to work in the UK. Non-EU nationals must have the relevant approval to work in the UK from the UK Border Agency.

Key Criteria	Job Requirements	Essential or desirable
Knowledge/ Skills	• Effective customer care skills, both face-to-face and via the telephone.	E
	• Must be capable of organising own workload to meet targets and deadlines	E
	• Needs to be logical, flexible, and able to work under pressure especially when face to face.	E
	• Effective written and oral communication skills.	E
	• Ability to work efficiently and effectively in a very busy and challenging environment	E
	• Knowledge of subsidy classifications and understand of implications of subsidy	D
Qualifications	• Qualified to a good general standard of education (including GCSE English & Maths (Grade A – C) or an equivalent qualification)	E
	• Full clean driving licence or ability to make suitable travel arrangements	E
Experience	• Experience of working in a Benefits’ based environment, preferably in an Assessor or Customer Services role.	D
	• Effective knowledge of Housing Benefit legislation, Council Tax Support Schemes, and the Welfare Reforms	D
	• Evidence of previous experience of using computerised databases and other information technology	E
	• Experience of dealing with the general public and at times dealing with difficult customers	E

Aptitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable and willing to take responsibility for own actions • A flexible approach in terms of place and cross-organisation working • Able to work fairly and ensure policies are applied consistently • A collaborative approach to working with colleagues, external organisations, and partners • Contribute ideas and learning to support the Council as a learning organisation 	E E E E E
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