

Role profile

Job Title:	Council Tax and Housing Benefits Customer Service Officer
Department:	Customer and Transactional Services
Directorate:	Resources

Grade:	7
Post no.:	32605, 32608, 32609, 32610
Location:	Perceval House

Role reports to:	Customer & Transactional Services Team Manager
Direct reports:	None
Indirect reports:	None

Job description

Recruitment practices to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and/or vulnerable adults apply to this post in addition to the requirement to obtain a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Purpose of role

- To provide a comprehensive and in-depth telephone service for council tax and housing benefit/council tax support enquiries.
- To ensure that all contacts receive a good customer experience, in a professional, timely and courteous manner always.
- To explain both housing benefit/ council tax support entitlement to the customer to enable them to agree to the appropriate council tax payment arrangement.
- To accurately update/amend accounts/claims with regard to agreed procedures.
- To facilitate and promote the use of online services to Ealing residents e.g., Myaccount.

Key accountabilities

- To acquire and retain a thorough understanding of Council Tax and Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support legislation to efficiently manage enquiries.
- To be able to clearly explain and process accounts at all stages of the council tax recovery process from reminder to committal stage and be able to explain in detail a customer's housing benefit/council tax support entitlement in a manner that the customer will be able to understand, via the telephone and/or face to face.
- To keep up to date with new Housing benefit/council tax support and Council Tax policies and procedures, regulations and changes to welfare benefits, tax and pension credits.
- To support residents in accessing the council tax and housing benefit portals, including assisting with registration and linking accounts.
- To negotiate payment arrangements for Council Tax liabilities following confirmation of the balance outstanding having regard to any benefit entitlement.
- To use negotiating skills and exercise discretion by making and agreeing payment arrangements with defaulting customers in accordance with laid down procedures and processes.
- To liaise as necessary with officers within both the council tax and benefit service back offices, other internal departments and external agencies, housing associations, civil enforcement officers, landlords etc. while dealing with customer accounts/claims to ensure resolution of the enquiry.
- To raise inspection requests or refer cases to the valuation/database team in respect of any properties that may have a property exemption issue or may be subject to a change in the valuation list.
- To be able to take the necessary action i.e., either cancel or suspend a housing benefit/council tax support award or close a council tax account

following the report of a relevant change in circumstances e.g., death/change in household members, increase in income etc.

- To be able to explain clearly and concisely complex case issues to enable the customer to have confidence and understanding that their benefit entitlement is correct.
- Proactively listen to the customer to enable the correct advice and information to be given to the customer.
- To use Council ICT systems to accurately maintain records, promptly logging all enquiry and contact details, provided.
- To provide information and guidance on Council policies, procedures and guidelines according to statute and best practice.
- To assist customers with ongoing difficult and potentially confrontational issues, which require an increased level of understanding and sensitivity.
- To engage with customers or their agents and establish the nature of their query.
- To be aware of other services, that may be associated with an enquiry and offer additional information and advice as relevant.
- To process a variety of council tax correspondence/forms including direct debits, applications for discounts, exemptions, inspection requests and refunds and to create or close an account as a result of a move in/within/out of the borough.
- To report any discrepancies that become apparent during customer service delivery regarding information or system faults to the Team Manager.
- To provide support and assistance to other team members and provide cover as and when directed.
- To create and issue correspondence or forms confirming actions taken or advice provided in response to enquiries, such as Special Payment

Arrangements (SPA), Direct Debits, summons withdrawal letters, income & expenditure forms etc.

- To assist in the induction and training of new staff.
- At all times to carry out the above duties in accordance with the council's health and safety, equal opportunities, and other relevant policies and to adhere to the guidelines of the Data Protection Act.
- To carry out other duties and responsibilities of a similar nature and at a similar level which may be allocated from time to time.

Key performance indicators

- To achieve expected call taking volumes
- Complete enquires within call taking times.
- Average call wait times (Service and Department)
- Ensure accuracy in account and claim activity.
- Achieve targets for processing administrative tasks.

Key relationships (internal and external)

- Customers
- Operational Services (back offices)
- Peers
- Internal Departments
- Third parties representing customer.
- Civil Enforcement Agencies, Housing Associations/landlords/Agents, Employers, DWP, Job Centre etc

Authority level

- None

Person specification

Community and partnership working are essential for all roles as are a commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and ensuring Health and Safety at Work for everyone working at Ealing Council.

****Candidates are only required to address the criteria marked with ****

Please provide examples from your work experience that demonstrate how you meet these criteria.

Essential knowledge, skills and abilities

1. Experience, understanding and knowledge of council tax and/or housing benefits service.
2. ****** Ability to fulfil all spoken aspects of the role with confidence through the medium of English. (May be tested) ******
3. ****** Able to maintain composure and deliver a professional service when customers become difficult, abusive, or distressed. ******
4. Demonstrates excellent customer care skills by seeking to understand the needs of customers and building rapport.
5. Ability to influence and negotiate with customers in respect of customer accounts/claims.
6. ****** Ability to work effectively both as part of a team and independently. ******
7. Communicates effectively using clear, plain English, to respond to written customer enquiries.
8. Knowledge of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions including Microsoft office suite.
9. ****** Ability to work accurately whilst understanding the importance of meeting strict deadlines. ******

10. Ability to work to tight deadlines and agreed performance targets and organise/prioritise own workload.
11. **Ability to maintain, update and interrogate computerised records, quickly and accurately. **
12. ** Good keyboard skills. (may be tested) **
13. ** Demonstrable verbal and written communication skills with the ability to communicate effectively in writing and by telephone (may be tested) **
14. ** Awareness of Equality & Diversity, Data Protection and Health and Safety legislation and the ability to adhere to these and Ealing Council's policies and procedures. **

Essential qualification(s) and experience

1. ** Possesses a good working knowledge of council tax and/or housing benefit and council tax support legislation. **
2. ** Proven experience of working in a customer services/service delivery area. **
3. ** Ability to interact with diverse customers in a multi-cultural environment. **
4. Proven ability to successfully resolve queries by telephone.
5. ** Experience in the use of a variety of ICT systems, databases and applications including Microsoft Suite and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. **List not exhaustive.** **
6. Ability to take a proactive approach to dealing with customer complaints or enquiries.
7. Experience of drafting and composing responses to enquiries in writing, and email.
8. Level of education that indicates a good level of literacy and numeracy skills.

Values and behaviours

Improved life for residents	Trustworthy	Collaborative	Innovative	Accountable
• Is passionate about making Ealing a better place • Can see and appreciate things from a resident point of view • Understands what people want and need • Encourages change to tackle underlying causes or issues	• Does what they say they will do on time • Is open and honest • Treats all people fairly	• Ambitious and confident in leading partnerships • Offers to share knowledge and ideas • Challenges constructively and respectfully listens to feedback • Overcomes barriers to develop our outcomes for residents	• Tries out ways to do things better, faster and for less cost • Brings in ideas from outside to improve performance • Takes calculated risks to improve outcomes • Learns from mistakes and failures	• Encourages all stakeholders to participate in decision making • Makes things happen • Acts on feedback to improve performance • Works to high standards