

Grading

Job Description and Employee Specification

<u>Job title:</u> Debt Management Officer	<u>Service area:</u> Finance
<u>Post number:</u>	<u>Division:</u> Local Taxation & Benefits
<u>Grade:</u> 6	<u>Section/team:</u> Debt Management

Overall purpose of job:

Responsible for contributing to maximising the effective recovery and management of debts to the Council including Council Tax, Business Rates, Sundry debts and Benefit overpayments.

Responsible for the provision of a front facing Debt Management delivery service, providing support directly to customers both in person, online and by telephone. Ensuring customer income is maximised through appropriate advice and support, increasing their ability to pay.

Contributing to the pre-determined strategic direction of the shared service to be realised within the boundaries of all statutory requirements and local priorities.

Post holders will be expected to be flexible in undertaking the duties and responsibilities attached to their post and may be asked to perform other duties, which reasonably correspond to the general character of the post and are commensurate with its level of responsibility.

Main responsibilities:

This is a post within the shared service agreement between North and North East Lincolnshire. The post holder is responsible for the daily delivery of a debt recovery function, including customer contact within the shared service agreement.

The post holder will contribute to service delivery plans and the process of managing Council debt. The post holder will take responsibility for managing their own workload within a pre – determined service delivery framework.

1. Using a range of appropriate IT systems to recover debt owed to the Council, including Council Tax, NNDR, Sundry Debts and Benefit Overpayments
2. Attend Magistrate Court hearings to provide support for Court Enforcement officers and make arrangements with customers as appropriate
3. Support the delivery of the service improvement plan to achieve effective outcomes.
4. Maintain awareness of changes in legislation and new initiatives which impact on the delivery of the Debt Management service

Assist service management to implement a culture of continual improvement in process

Main responsibilities:

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3. Support the delivery of the service improvement plan to achieve effective outcomes.
4. Maintain awareness of changes in legislation and new initiatives which impact on the delivery of the Debt Management service
5. Assist service management to implement a culture of continual improvement in process and learning
6. Effectively communicate with partners, stakeholders, and customers to manage sensitive, contentious, and complex issues on a daily basis. Demonstrate skilled liaison and negotiation to achieve positive service outcomes, ensuring transparency, empathy, and resolution-focused engagement
7. Support the development of a customer focussed, outcomes based culture within the operational team
8. Make recommendations in cases of customer hardship, in making arrangements or write off.
9. Any other duties commensurate with the level of the post.
10. Deputise for the Debt Management Team Manager

Knowledge, skill and experience:

Knowledge/Qualifications

- Practical In-depth knowledge of legislation and best practice relating to local authority council tax, non-domestic rates, benefit and sundry debts collection and fraud awareness
- Knowledge of Council Services and associated sundry debts
- Knowledge of the principles set out in the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act

Skills and abilities

- Ability to identify potential avenues of assistance to customers in managing their debts, signposting for possible benefit entitlement where appropriate.
- Excellent negotiation skills in assisting customers in the management and recovery of their debts.
- High levels of problem solving skills, able to recognise problems, identify & implement solutions.
- Ability to be proactive and reactive in response to a constantly changing work environment, often with conflicting priorities

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- Ability to understand the impact of organisational change
- Ability to identify development opportunities for self, systems and the service as a whole
- High level of communication skills both written and verbal, in order to ensure that customer interaction leads to resolution of enquiry at the earliest possible point
- Ability to support the development and implementation of work based procedures and key performance measures
- Ability to adapt to changing technology with ability to understand IT issues and to harness IT as an effective business tool.
- A high level of both literacy and numeracy skills
- Personal skills which will allow the building of close working relationships with colleagues, partners and stakeholders.

Experience

- Experience of reviewing complex information and explaining in plain English
- Experience of working to strict deadlines and in difficult situations, and ability to work on own initiative
- Experience of providing an effective service to customers and good customer service skills
- Experience of working as part of a team

Proven track record in:

- Dealing with customers and recovery of debt in a high volume environment
- Experience of managing customer needs and improving the customers experience of using the service

Creativity and innovation:

Ensure operating standards and outputs comply with regulatory frameworks relating to Local Taxation and Benefits debt recovery and the Council's policies, constitution and governance arrangements

- Effectively communicating with colleagues, including remotely i.e. homeworkers or staff working at another site
- Ability to respond to individual and complex queries from customers, look for acceptable solutions to problems customers may identify whether through service requests or complaints
- Ensuring the most effective method for recovering debt is used, taking into account individual debtors' circumstances and Council policy.
- Actively engage in identifying solutions to improving performance of the team and ultimately the service, quality of outputs and the stakeholder experience.
- Building relationships with representatives of external organisations in order to effectively engage them to support consistent delivery of the service in order to support customer needs
- The level of creativity is restricted only by a framework of policies, procedures, regulations and standards and direction of senior managers.
- Guidance and support is provided to the team to understand and apply the appropriate level of creativity and innovation within their roles.
- Handling of complaints and Freedom of Information requests
- Sensitivity when dealing with vulnerable people and complex accounts.

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- Keep up to date with legislation and regulations including data protection and information from DWP
- Create relevant documents e.g. letters and spreadsheets to support the team

Contacts and relationships:

- Team Managers and other staff - Daily contact with own team and with members of other teams in relation to the provision of appropriate debt management support function service.
- Shared Service Management – regular contact on issues affecting the service,
- Elected Members and MPs –regularly (weekly) supporting the response to issues raised by them on behalf of their constituents, ad hoc contact
- Taxpayers – frequent daily contact to provide advice on liability and payment
- Staff within other departments such as Customer Services, regularly working with other departments to ensure that the service outcomes are achieved by the most efficient means.
- General public and their representatives- daily contact to effectively apply tact, sensitivity diplomacy and persuasive skills to determine and deliver support, advice or responses to a wide range of complex and contentious matters.
- Partner organisations who support the delivery of advice, for example (not exhaustive) CAB,CAS, . Regular contact to ensure customer outcomes meet the needs of both the council and partner
- Private sector organisations and suppliers – support delivery of the service
- Support the establishment and maintenance of relationships and alliances to promote the service with External organisations such as DWP, CTP, Job Centre Plus, Credit Union, Valuation Office Agency, Valuation Tribunal, HMCTS, HMRC, Staff from other councils, employers and landlords.
- Bailiff and Collection Agencies – daily contact in relation to debt which has been sent to be collected externally.
- Official Receiver, Insolvency Companies/ Administrators, and Solicitors - Daily contact , to ensure accurate records are updated in line with financial legislation, with regard to customers who are having financial difficulties.

Decision making:

- Efficient and effective decision making by the post holder will determine the level of debt recovery to the Council, including financial entitlement to a range of benefits and additional support to customers, which supports wider Financial Inclusion strategies
- Determine the correct process where legislation is open to interpretation.
- Requirement to use discretion, for example in determining payment arrangements which meet the needs of the customer and the Council.
- Provide support to management to respond to complaints and Freedom of Information requests and assisting with court enforcement cases to ensure all documentation is accurate.

Consequences

- Effective and informed decision making will assist in an efficient and effective service to the general public, which is responsive to customer need

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- The impact of decisions in relation to service delivery standards and/or procedures would not always be immediately obvious, as it would normally take some time before the impact on the customer is known by the Authority
- Decisions made will have a financial impact on customers, and their ability to pay outstanding Council debts,
- Decisions made can impact on the Council's reputation and have an effect on the collection rate and the Council's financial position.

Responsibility for resources:

Financial resources:

None

Physical resources:

Agile working kit, including but not exclusive to a laptop

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work demands:

- The post holder is expected to manage their own work programme, identifying cases which require immediate attention. Much has to be done to set recovery deadlines. E.g. to ensure court dates are met .
- Daily workload is influenced by issues that require prompt consideration e.g. volumes of complaints or telephone calls received, system problems, issue of summonses, attendance at meetings, staff cover and one-off tasks and enquiries

Physical demands:

- Role is office (or home) based, using DSE equipment frequently.
- Requirement to attend court

Working conditions:

Office environment however there may be a need to travel to other sites/venues both within and outside the Council area.

Requirement to attend court on rota basis

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Work context:

This is a post within the shared service agreement between North and North East Lincolnshire. The postholder is responsible for the daily delivery of a robust debt management service at a single site within the shared service agreement.

Some risk to personal safety problems arising from the environment of public / clients

The post involves daily contact with individual customers and their representatives, in relation to complex and often contentious cases.

In many cases of customer contact the customer or their representative will be aggrieved by a decision made in relation to their debt, and there are daily instances of verbal and/or written abuse aimed at the service and the individual.

The majority of contact is via written correspondence and telephone queries. The postholder may occasionally interview a customer within the office environment or at court.

This postholder is responsible for ensuring that the work programme is carried out on time and that the work carried out is accurate.

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Position in organisation:

Indicate how many staff the post is directly accountable for:

Are posts in more than one location? Yes No

Is this at the same site? Are the posts managed highly mobile?

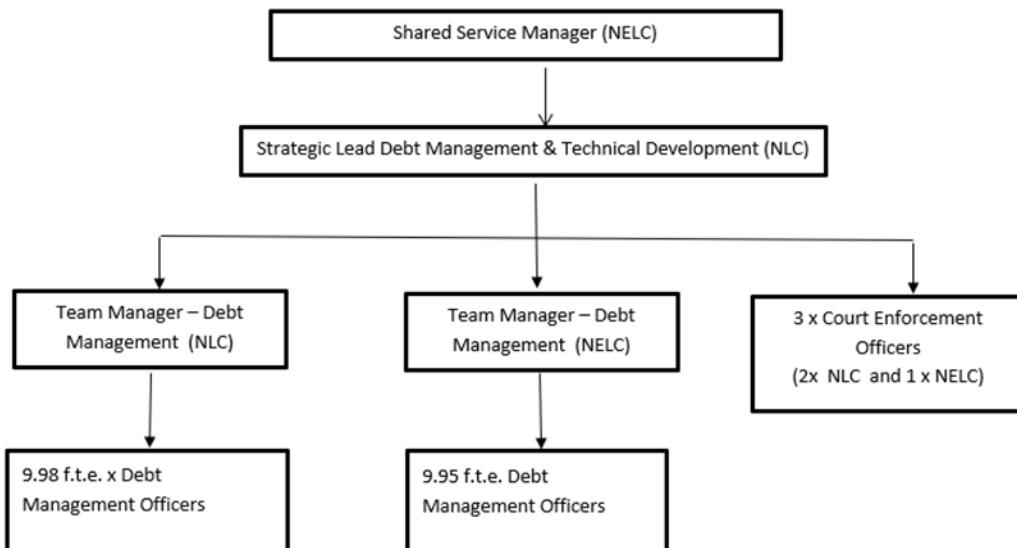
Is the supervision/management shared with another post in the structure?

Yes No

Please indicate which post(s)

Member of the Debt Management team reporting to the Debt Management Team Manager. Because of the level of technical knowledge required for the post, existing postholders are expected to assist the Team Manager with training and mentoring new members of the team

This post is part of a shared service with North East Lincolnshire Council and positioned as shown below in the combined structure chart:



Job Description Version Control	
Date evaluated	
Date updated	
Updated by (manager name)	
Checked by (HR name)	

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ESSENTIAL CRITERIA	ASSESSED THROUGH:
Knowledge, Skills and Experience	Application form (follow up at interview)
Experience of reviewing complex information and explaining in plain English	
Experience of working to strict deadlines and in difficult situations, and ability to work on own initiative	
Experience of providing an effective service to customers and good customer service skills	
Experience of working as part of a team	
Experience of managing customer needs and improving the customer's experience of using the service	
Knowledge, Skills and Experience	Interview
Practical in-depth knowledge of legislation and best practice relating to local authority council tax, non-domestic rates, benefit and sundry debts collection and fraud awareness.	
Knowledge of Council Services and associated sundry debts	
Knowledge of the principles set out in the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act	
High level of communication skills both written and verbal, in order to ensure that customer interaction leads to resolution of enquiry at the earliest possible point	
Self motivated and supportive of colleagues to embrace new initiatives and meet departmental targets.	
Ability to identify potential avenues of assistance to customers in managing their debts, signposting for possible benefit entitlement where appropriate	
Excellent negotiation skills in assisting customers in the management and recovery of their debts.	
High level of problem solving skills, able to recognise problems, identify & implement solutions.	
Ability to be proactive and reactive in response to a constantly changing work environment, often with conflicting priorities	
A high level of IT skills, for example, Word, Excel	
A high level of both literacy and numeracy skills	
Ability to support the development and implementation of work based procedures and key performance measures	
Ability to understand the impact of organisational change	
Ability to identify development opportunities for self, systems and the service as a whole	
Personal skills which will allow the building of close working relationships with colleagues, partners and stakeholders.	
Ability to effectively deal with customers who may aggrieved to reach a mutually agreeable outcome.	
Education, Training and Qualifications	Original documents
Good level of education, qualified to NVQ level 2 (GCSE A* to C) in English and Maths (or be able to demonstrate an equivalent level of knowledge & skill)	

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Working Arrangements	Interview
Postholder will be based in either Scunthorpe or Grimsby or any other suitable location as per agile working policy (e.g. at home). There may be an occasional requirement to travel to the other site.	
Postholder will need to be available to cover pre-determined shifts to provide telephony cover to support LT&B service delivery	
Postholder is required to attend court on a rota basis with the Court Enforcement Officer to deal with customer queries and make arrangements to pay	
May be occasional requirement to deputise for the Team Manager (Debt Management)	

DESIRABLE CRITERIA	ASSESSED THROUGH:
Knowledge, Skills and Experience	Application form (follow up at interview)
Experience of working in a Local Taxation debt recovery service	

THE POST IS SUBJECT TO:	
Disclosure of convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exemption) Act 1974	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Political restriction	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The ability to speak fluent English under the Immigration Act 2016	
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

• Version Control	
Author	HR Policy Team
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