

**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON**  
**CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**JOB DESCRIPTION**

<b>POST TITLE:</b>	Head of Benefits
<b>Grade:</b>	MGC
<b>DIVISION/SECTION:</b>	Customer Services
<b>Location:</b>	Merton Civic Centre
<b>Responsible to:</b>	Assistant Director of Resources
<b>Post number:</b>	<b>Date:</b> July 2022

#### **MAIN PURPOSE**

1. To lead on all aspects of the strategic development and operational management of Merton's benefits service (benefits, welfare benefits and business support) ensuring that the service meets the diverse needs of Merton's residents.
2. To be a member of the Divisional Management Team and participate in the overall management of the Division.
3. To provide leadership and direction to develop effective working within the benefits claims and appeals processing teams, welfare benefits and local welfare support and business support.
4. To make a proactive contribution to the overall management, development and reputation of the department and the Council taking the lead on specific cross service and corporate initiatives such as welfare reform.

#### **MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. To provide advice to the Leader, Members, the Director, Assistant Director, Head of Services and managers across the authority on benefits and welfare benefits.
2. To ensure that current legislation and best practice principles for the provision of benefits services are adhered to and that the Council's

statutory duties are met at all times with regards to the award of housing benefit.

3. Provide strategic leadership, direction and support to staff within the service to ensure effective management of resources to achieve standards and continuous improvements in the delivery of the service
4. To be responsible for the section budget in excess of £1.9 million per annum and awarding £80 million in housing benefit.
5. To represent the Director and Assistant Director or council as appropriate at external meetings.
6. To represent Merton Council and/or the department in any cross cutting initiatives, such as the Cost of Living Crisis or similar. To lead any such internal initiatives where required.
7. Responsible for the payment of housing benefit and local council tax support to the Council's residents ensuring accurate awards of benefit. Responsible for completion and verification of the yearly housing benefit grant claim, meeting external audit and DWP validation.
8. Manage the external audit of grant claims and systems audits ensuring accurate and value for money audits are completed
9. Ensure customer focussed, effective and efficient provision of a comprehensive range of services including but not exhaustively the following:
  - Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support
  - Local Welfare Support Scheme
  - Welfare Benefits
10. Advise the Assistant Director and Director on forecasted medium to long term cost of council tax support scheme.
11. Manage the business support team which provides support to both the Benefits and Revenues services.
12. Responsible for all procurement for the service. Ensuring contracts and procurement are undertaken within corporate procedure and policies.
13. Ensure adherence to the Council's policies, standing orders, financial regulations, scheme of management and other departmental and corporate procedures and policies.
14. Manage the section ensuring that recruitment, training, development, appraisal, performance, workload allocation, supervision, quality assurance, risk and other management activities are carried out in accordance with council policy.

15. Responsible for the security of all the systems used in the section and the integrity of the information having full regard to the Council's statutory duty and adherence to the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation.

16. Any other duties as requested by the Assistant Director or Director.

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**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

**POST TITLE:** Head of Benefits

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**Knowledge**

Detailed knowledge of housing benefits legislation

In-depth knowledge of the legal framework within which local government finance operates and in particular those acts relating to housing benefits, and council tax support.

Knowledge and ability to contribute to the introduction and development of new systems both manual and computerised.

Sound working knowledge and experience of housing benefit and council tax support.

**Experience**

Experience of managing a team(s) in benefits services and to manage a heavy workload and competing priorities.

Experience of successfully managing, supervising and training staff in a variety of functions.

Experience of managing high level and technically complex or high profile projects.

Experience or knowledge of managing and controlling substantial budgets.

**Skills**

Establish and maintain a culture of performance management to meet all elements of associated performance targets, including BVPI's.

Highly effective verbal and written skills to produce a range of committee, policy or similar reports and represent the organisation in a variety of forums.

Highly effective negotiation skills.

Ability to provide effective leadership in the management and motivation of staff to deliver the objectives of the section.

High level financial skills.

High level IT skills.

Demonstrable commitment to customer-focused/sensitive services and its application to the borough's population with particular reference to housing benefits and the needs of the community.

Understanding of and commitment to quality and equality of opportunity in all areas of activity of the service.

Ability to effectively promote and expand the services of the service as appropriate.

Innovative to secure service improvements and respond to customer needs.