

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: WELFARE RIGHTS OFFICER

DEPARTMENT: ADVICE SERVICES

PURPOSE OF THE JOB

As part of a multi-skilled team, the post holder will be responsible for delivering a high-quality benefits advice, advocacy and training service to both internal and external clients of Link Group and partner organisations.

In addition, the post holder will work in collaboration with housing and debt and money advice staff to provide clients with budgeting support to minimise rent arrears and maximise rent collection.

There is a requirement to work extensively with staff teams in Link's Regional Offices.

MAIN TASKS

- Responsibility for the ongoing management of a welfare rights caseload. This includes reviewing and ongoing maintenance of cases until resolution of client's issues.
- The postholder will be required to accurately and fully consider the advice and assistance offered to clients as incorrect advice and/or actions may have consequences for the client and the business
- At all times the postholder will strive to maintain the highest standards of personal integrity, working flexibly to meet the needs of our internal and external clients, which may occasionally require working out of hours.
- Follow policy and procedure to maintain accurate and comprehensive case progress actions and notes within case management and housing systems.
- Using knowledge of the social security legislation and other financial support available, analyse the client's circumstances to determine the relevant course of action to ensure the client's income is maximised
- Represent clients at Social Security and Child Support First and Upper Tier Tribunal hearings. This will entail investigating decisions made by central and local Government decision makers, identifying and analysing relevant legislation and caselaw, building a case to support the client's appeal, preparing and submitting a written submission to present in person to the Judge in either or both chambers.
- Keep abreast of changes in Welfare Law, assessing impacts for clients and the Advice Service, attending internal / external training as required. Regular changes in Social Security and Welfare Law require the postholder to be responsible for continually reviewing and updating their specialist technical knowledge of legislation, caselaw, guidance, as well as new benefits or financial support for clients.
- Research, prepare and provide training, advice and support to staff teams across the Link Group and partner organisations.

- When mandated by the client, liaise, mediate, negotiate and act on behalf of the client in relation to benefit disputes with relevant agencies on reviews, mandatory reconsiderations and appeals
- The postholder will be required to carry out a wide range of complex social security and financial support related tasks including completion of claim forms for the full range of UK and Scottish Government benefits. This will be managed to often tight deadlines and with frequent interruptions by clients both external and internal.
- The postholder will be responsible for the accurate collection, recording and storage of personal and often very sensitive information relating to clients, requiring sound knowledge of data protection legislation and adherence to strict data processing policies and procedures.
- Due to the unique nature and personalities of clients and the complex technical nature of the benefits legislation the postholder will have to use excellent interpersonal and innovative skills to resolve problems that arise during engagement with clients through various communication methods.
- Enhance tenancy sustainment and mitigate tenancy rent arrears, failures, and abandonments by carrying out pre-tenancy benefit checks where appropriate to ensure the tenancy is affordable and relevant benefits are claimed
- Identify tenant rent arrears, debt and budgeting difficulties and liaise with Debt and Money Advice and Housing staff on behalf of clients to mitigate against these
- Maintain and develop effective working relationships with internal and external customers (DWP (Department for Work and Pensions), Pensions Service, NHS, local authorities, and other statutory and voluntary agencies) regarding the needs of the client.
- Promote the Advice Service through Welfare Rights surgeries, newsletters, campaigns, and attendance at conferences, sharing best practice and providing feedback back to colleagues as required. Using their experience and initiative, the postholder will identify and recommend amendments to work practices to ensure maximum efficiency.
- Understand the requirements of working to the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers Framework and always adhering to them.
- Take relevant action to resolve complaints and client feedback at the first stage in accordance with policy and procedures.
- To comply with the Health & Safety Policy, reporting any matters of concern to the Health & Safety Officer, Representative or line manager.
- To actively promote the Equality & Diversity Policy and practice in all aspects of the job role as it relates to colleagues, tenants, contractors, consultants, and external agencies.
- To carry out other duties, within the scope of the job, and to meet the needs of the business.

TECHNICAL COMPETENCE

- Excellent and in-depth knowledge of welfare benefits legislation
- Awareness of debt and money advice legislation
- Performance management
- Information systems

RELATIONSHIPS

- Link group staff
- Partner organisations
- Board Members
- Local Authorities, Department for Work and Pensions and Scottish Social Security Agency
- Other agencies
- General Public / Tenants/ Sharing owners
- Advice Service staff

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

As a significant proportion of work is required out-with the office environment, post holders must hold a current driver's licence and have their own transport during business hours.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Welfare Rights Officer is accountable to the Advice Service Leader.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Excellent customer care and customer empathy skills	✓	
Commitment to equal opportunities	✓	
Excellent & recent knowledge of the Welfare Benefits system	✓	
Knowledge of Welfare Reform	✓	
In-depth, detailed and recent experience of all aspects of social security law	✓	
Experience of representation at social security appeal tribunals	✓	
Extensive experience of using IT Systems including MS Office and databases	✓	
Excellent negotiation, mediation and listening skills	✓	
Extensive experience of giving advice in relation to social security benefits including complex cases	✓	
Extensive experience of assisting clients to apply for benefits, tax credits and charitable grants	✓	
Knowledge of wider issues affecting housing associations in Scotland		✓
Experience of working in a fast-paced role dealing with a range of duties and customers	✓	
Previous work with housing associations		✓



EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS		
Good standard of education	✓	
Relevant Welfare Benefits training/qualification	✓	
Full clean UK driving licence and car – to update	✓	
SKILLS & ABILITIES		
Ability to work as part of a close-knit team	✓	
Communication skills – oral and written	✓	
Excellent time management / personal organisation	✓	
Experience of using AdvicePro		✓
Presentation skills		✓
Ability to work on own initiative	✓	
Ability to work under pressure	✓	



COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	(ALL ESSENTIAL)
COMMUNICATION	
Communicates ideas and information effectively, both verbally and in writing, ensuring messages are clear and understandable. Shares information openly and encourages a two-way dialogue. Use appropriate language and style that is both relevant to the situation and to the people being addressed.	
CUSTOMER CENTRED APPROACH	
Puts the person at the heart of the service and can understand both internal and external customers and service users' needs. Recognises that customers and service users are unique. Takes personal responsibility for securing the satisfaction and wellbeing of customers and service users. Shows perseverance and innovation in resolving problems. Encourages and maintains open, positive relationships with a wide range of people. Listens and communicates assertively to ensure mutual understanding.	
INNOVATION	
Constantly strives to evaluate, question and improve how things are done. Views improvement as a continuous process. Creatively explores and applies innovative approaches to improve the quality and delivery of services.	
WORKING TOGETHER	
Willingness to participate and contribute effectively to the team effort. Will put own interests aside when appropriate to meet the needs of the team.	
LEADERSHIP	
The ability to lead, inspire and encourage others to meet business objectives whilst providing a clear vision and sense of purpose in all activities. Actively participates and contribute towards Project Teams, Committees and other working groups. Is supportive of colleagues, including secondees, placements and new employees.	
PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS	
Takes personal responsibility for making things happen and achieving results. Presents ideas clearly and persuasively. Willing to take responsibility in challenging circumstances or when things go wrong. The ability to recognise and control own emotions and to respond to situations objectively, even when under pressure. The self-confidence and flexibility to adapt own response to suit the needs of the situation or to respond flexibly depending on the other person's approach.	
PROBLEM SOLVING AND REASONING	
The ability to identify and resolve problems by gathering and analysing information from a range of sources and make informed and effective decisions. Draws appropriate conclusions and considers the consequences of these decisions. Willingness to participate and contribute effectively to the team effort. Will put own interests aside when appropriate to meet the needs of the team.	



INFORMATION SYSTEMS

A functional understanding of Link's core information communication technology – including Microsoft Office, Filestream systems and Department IT systems. An ability to access and use personal computer software for effective communication and the management of information. Has a basic knowledge of PCs, including keyboard skills and will take active steps to update personal computer literacy skills and to support others when required.

LEGISLATION

Have up to date knowledge and a good understanding of legislation and best practice relevant to the job role. Is proactive and anticipates the effects of new legislation on the job role, the customer, policies, procedures and the organisation.

SUMMARY TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

This is a summary of the general terms and conditions of employment of Link Housing employees. Those quoted apply to full-time posts and part-time staff will be eligible to receive the same employment terms on a pro-rated basis. Employees on fixed term contracts are also eligible, subject to the restriction of their contract. An individual contract may determine additional terms particular to that appointment and employees should also refer to their own contract of employment.

Hours	35 per week, normally worked Monday to Friday, however flexible working arrangements will be considered.										
Contract	Fixed Term until 31 March 2025										
Location	To be confirmed (Paisley, Cumbernauld, Bathgate, Falkirk or Edinburgh)										
Salary	<p>Salary will be dependent on skills and experience. Salaries are paid on the last Friday of each month.</p> <p>Progressing through the salary range will be determined by an assessment of individual performance against an agreed Job Plan and following a recommendation made to the Management Team at each performance year-end.</p> <p>An Inflation-Related Pay Award is normally awarded annually in April.</p>										
Annual Leave	Annual leave is equal to 35 days per year (including public holidays), rising to 40 days. Annual leave will be pro-rata for part-time staff.										
Pension	<p>Link is required by law to automatically enrol eligible employees to its pension scheme. Auto-enrolment rates from 1 April 2019 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Link: 5% of basic salary •Employee: 3% of basic salary <p>Employees can opt to increase their contributions:</p> <table> <tr> <td>Employee:</td> <td>4%</td> <td>5%</td> <td>6%</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Link:</td> <td>6%</td> <td>7%</td> <td>8%</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> </table>	Employee:	4%	5%	6%	7%	Link:	6%	7%	8%	9%
Employee:	4%	5%	6%	7%							
Link:	6%	7%	8%	9%							

Life Assurance	Link provide a Death-in-Service Benefit Scheme [subject to eligibility], providing beneficiaries with up to the value of four times your annual salary.
Travel	Authorised out of pocket travel expenses are reimbursed. Business car miles rate is currently 45p per mile. Authorised passenger rate is currently 5p per mile.
Flexible Working	The Group and its subsidiary companies offer a flexible working arrangement [flexi-time].
Probationary Period	All new employees are required to complete a 6-month probationary period.
Support and Supervision	All staff will participate in our Performance Management System, which includes at least three formal Review Meetings with your line manager.
Smoking	All Link group offices operate a NO SMOKING POLICY. Dependant on your role, you may have to work with people who use our services where there could be an exposure to passive smoking.
Health & Safety	Link promotes a healthy working environment and achieves this aim by supporting an active, staff-led Health and Safety Committee.
Health Care Cash Plan	A non-contributory Healthcare Cash plan scheme for employees and children under 18 years old. [Option to include partners]

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