

Benefits Specialist Job Description

Role purpose

To provide specialist casework and representation for clients with complex benefits issues

Casework

- Provide casework covering the full range of benefits.
- Act for the client where necessary by calculating, negotiating, drafting or writing letters and telephoning.
- Negotiate with third parties as appropriate.
- Ensure income maximisation through the take up of appropriate benefits.
- Prepare and present cases and represent clients to the appropriate statutory bodies, tribunals and courts as appropriate.
- Assist clients with other related problems where they are an integral part of their case and refer to other advisers or specialist agencies as appropriate.
- Ensure that all casework conforms to Citizens Advice standards and the Advice Quality Standard.
- Maintain case records for the purpose of continuity of casework, information retrieval, statistical monitoring and report preparation.
- Ensure that all work conforms to the organisation's systems and procedures.

Research and campaigns

- Assist with research and campaigns work by providing information about clients' circumstances.
- Provide statistical information on the number of clients and nature of cases and provide regular reports to management.
- Alert other staff to local and national issues.

Professional development

- Keep up to date with legislation, case law, policies and procedures relating to benefits and undertake appropriate training.
- Read relevant publications.
- Attend relevant internal and external meetings as agreed with the line manager.
- Prepare for and attend supervision sessions/team meetings/management team meetings as appropriate.
- Assist with Service initiatives for the improvement of services.

Administration

- Review and make recommendations for improvements to services.
- Maintain local information systems.
- Use IT for statistical recording, record keeping and document production.
- Keep up to date with policies and procedures relevant to work and undertake appropriate training.
- Attend internal and external meetings as agreed with the manager.
- Maintain close liaison with relevant external agencies.
- Maintain a library of reference material and case law.

Other duties and responsibilities

- Carry out any other tasks that may be within the scope of the post to ensure the effective delivery and development of the service.
- Demonstrate commitment to the aims and policies of the Citizens Advice service.
- Abide by health and safety guidelines and share responsibility for own safety and that of colleagues.

Person specification

- Knowledge and experience of a full range of benefits advice.
- Effective oral communication skills with particular emphasis on negotiating and representing.
- Effective writing skills with particular emphasis on negotiating, representing and preparing reviews, reports and correspondence.
- Ordered and prioritised approach to casework and an ability and willingness to follow and develop agreed procedures.
- Understand the issues involved in interviewing clients.
- Numerate to the level required in the tasks.
- Ability to prioritise own work, meet deadlines and manage caseload.
- Ability to use IT in the provision of advice and the preparation of reports and submissions.
- Ability to give and receive feedback objectively and sensitively and a willingness to challenge constructively.
- Ability to monitor and maintain own standards.
- Demonstrate understanding of social trends and their implications for clients and service provision.
- Understanding of and commitment to the aims and principles of the Citizens Advice service and its equality and diversity policies.