

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES

ROLE PROFILE

Directorate:	Finance	Job Title:	Enforcement Officer
Service	Revenues & Benefits	Indicative Grade:	H
Section	Revenues Team	Post Number:	

Relationships

Responsible to:	Team Leader (Arrears and Enforcement)
Responsible for:	N/a
Important Internal Relationships:	Other divisions within the Revenues and Benefits service Planning and Building Control Financial Services Housing Legal and other Council Departments. Fraud and Audit
Important External Relationships:	Council Tax debtors, letting agents, landlord Non Domestic debtors Valuation Office Agency The general public as Council Tax payers and their agents or valuers. Outside agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Chamber of Commerce and Kingston First, DWP. Magistrates' Court.

	<p>Council's Bailiffs and other recovery agencies as required.</p> <p>Other recovery agencies as required.</p>
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Main Purpose of the Job

Being a key member of the Revenue Team, the postholder will be an expert on enforcement processes and the regulations. They will undertake enforcement action to maximise collection rates and in so doing manage difficult situations including hard to reach debtors and debtors who are experiencing hardship. This role provides significant added value in identifying potential vulnerability, fraud and other irregularities that may have otherwise gone undetected and linking these to the relevant services as required.

Main Responsibilities of the Job - Operational

1. As a certificated Enforcement Officer, provide advice around enforcement legislation and process to the revenue managers and teams.
2. Enforcement work is at the most challenging end of debt collection and the Enforcement Officer will be responsible for dealing with volatile, difficult and vulnerable customers on a daily basis and effectively managing each situation as it arises.
3. To carry out enforcement duties in relation to revenue debts (including council tax, business rates, business improvement district and housing benefit overpayments) in accordance with Ministry of Justice enforcement regulations regarding taking control of goods and any other relevant legislation.
4. To undertake the full range of enforcement duties, calling on debtors at their address to obtain payment, execute enforcement notices, seize goods, organise the removal of goods, liaise with removal and storage companies and auction houses and where necessary make enquiries to trace the whereabouts of absconders and serve warrants.
5. Whilst at the debtor's property make on the spot decisions about proceeding with enforcement and any other action posed by the individual circumstances eg volatile customers, vulnerable customers, illegal activity etc
6. To manage the risk associated with enforcement work to ensure personal safety including assessing the risk at each stage of the enforcement process when calling on individual debtors.
7. Where vulnerability is identified liaise with safeguarding (Adults and Children) to improve the debtors position.
8. Establish an effective working relationship with the local police.

9. Where illegal activity is suspected refer to the police or the relevant agency or service and where necessary provide witness statements.
10. To ensure customers receive a courteous, approachable, helpful and professional service during the enforcement process.
11. To work as part of a team dealing with the collection of revenue ensuring Council policy and procedures, code of practice and Data Protection Act and all other relevant legislation are all adhered to.

Key Priorities

Post holders will lead on the following themes whilst having the flexibility to support all aspects of the team's work according to priorities, resources and workload.

Customer Service

Has a strong commitment to following our *Six Steps to delivering our Customer Commitment:*

- We go out of our way to get it right first time
- We listen, understand and deliver
- We respond positively and politely
- We respect each customer as an individual
- We take responsibility for the customer's issue or problem
- We work as a team to deliver the solution

To visit customers in their property adhering at all times to the Code of Conduct.

To deal with customers enquiries in a courteous, approachable, helpful and professional manner with due regard to the Lone Workers policy, the application of risk assessments and the use of health and safety equipment..

To own and resolve customer enquiries and minimize avoidable contact.

To be able to diffuse difficult situations maintaining a professional conduct at all times.

To ensure referrals or escalations to other team members or team leaders are effective and do not compromise service performance standards.

Technical/operational

To keep up to date with legislation and enforcement agent practices to ensure maintenance of professional qualifications and certification required for the job. Also to ensure good working relations with other staff within the service by providing training and support in relation to enforcement work and the requirements of the associated legislation identify training needs, assist in preparation and delivery of training and to undertake training as require

To have a wide knowledge of legislation affecting seizing goods, including Commercial Rents recovery, legislation relating to Council Tax Business Rates BIDS and Housing Benefit overpayments and the rights of Enforcement Agents in debt recovery.

Provide advice on enforcement and associated best practice to managers and teams as required and where necessary recommend areas for change or improvement.

Responsible for carrying out enforcement activities on unpaid debt.

Ensuring full and proper information is gained prior to visiting the debtor including identifying any caution before contact or other potential risk and the history of the debt.

Whilst visiting the debtor at their premises, identify risks as they occur and manage these effectively making on the spot decisions including when to involve the police.

Negotiating with the debtor to achieve payment, making on the spot decisions about arrangements and ability to pay and whether to signpost the debtor to other organisations or services for advice and assistance.

To be able to differentiate between those avoiding payment and those who may need a more sympathetic approach identifying vulnerable customers, either at preparatory or execution phase, and to ensure that recovery action is suspended or withdrawn, with and using knowledge of welfare benefits to enable maximisation of benefit take up and so the customer can receive advisory support..

Identify vulnerability and potential safeguarding concerns and make effective referrals to the appropriate services.

Have an awareness of potential fraud and illegal activity and where there are concerns contact the relevant agency. Identify the urgency of this referral and if necessary call the police for additional assistance.

Whilst visiting debtors obtain relevant information to progress the situation, receive payment, establish payment arrangements and seize or take control of goods and execute warrants,

Visiting debtors at different times of the day to ensure contact with the debtor is achieved. Visits should be conducted between 6am and 9pm Monday to Sunday in line with regulations. Visits need to be coordinated with other Enforcement Agents at the discretion of the Arrears Team Leader. A minimum of 2 Saturday visit per month is expected.

Responsibility for negotiating payment arrangements with debtors and actively monitoring those arrangement taking timely proactive action if in default.

Active monitoring of all Liability Orders where enforcement action has commenced to achieve full payment.

Serving of warrant of arrest with bail, statutory demands, bankruptcy petitions.

Planning own daily schedule of work, allocated to them by the Arrears Team Manager, to ensure the most efficient route to maximise the number of visits and optimise the potential financial return.

Responsible for liaising with auctioneers and vehicle removal companies. Ensuring good practice is observed at all times and maximum value is obtained for the Council where sale of goods becomes necessary.

To ensure that debts are collected in accordance with the legislation, procedures, codes of practice, health and safety regulations and Data Protection Act.

To return Warrants and Liability Orders where enforcement action is not possible in a timely manner.

To account for monies received and control the use of a manual receipt book and other documents, in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

To be responsible for the correct and timely issue of documents under the Taking Control of Goods regulations and be responsible for arranging the subsequent valuation for sale of removed goods and the maintenance of exempt goods listings.

To ensure that all seizure notices are kept in a secure place and available on request to justify fees applied.

To enter reports via appropriate devices / databases in accordance with the Councils processes and procedures.

To comply with all audit requests for information.

To provide and maintain detailed incident reports.

Maintain any vehicle provided by the Council and used to carry out the role to the standards required.

To provide information, support and advice to stakeholders and other services in order to meet the Council's overall standards in service delivery and customer care

To acquire and maintain a good knowledge of Council Tax and NNDR/BIDs regulations.

To keep the Arrears Team Manager informed of all matters concerning the post holder's workload on a regular basis and to report any incident requiring their attention, in respect of health and safety, a client of concern, equipment failure or circumstances that may impact on collection performance.

To work to targets and priorities, as set by the manager, and be responsible for recording and reporting performance against those targets, consistently meeting performance targets and standards.

To maintain performance statistics.

To prepare procedures and documentation in accordance with quality standards and legislation

To liaise with external suppliers and outside agents to ensure operation within the service requirements.

To amend and update existing accounts with relevant amendments in accordance with procedures

To have a knowledge of tracing systems and procedures and to utilise them responsibly.

To coordinate actions to collect where a range of debts are owed by an individual.

Performance

Consistently achieves performance targets and celebrates success with team

To develop, update and act on own Individual Personal Development Plan as discussed and agreed with the Team Leader.

To take responsibility for own performance, taking a proactive stance to ensure performance meets or exceeds standards required of the service.

Take responsibility for ensuring key equipment is fully operational including body camera, lone worker devices, mobile telephone and handheld devices.

General

Six Steps to working as One Council:

- Recognise the need to continually learn and adapt.
- We willingly share our knowledge and learning with others

- We work collaboratively across teams, services and partner organisations
- Looks for ways of improving what we do and how we do it
- We are comfortable with new technology and modern methods of working
- We are determined to make a difference to the lives of our customers

To support the Team Leader in developing and implementing the work programmes and projects for the team.

Ability to work flexibly and with minimal supervision in a pressurised environment and to work out of office hours as required.

To provide support and assistance to other members of the team and provide cover as and when directed.

To actively promote and work in accordance with RBK's Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, relevant policies and legislation. Due regard should be given to major religious or cultural festivals and consideration regarding the appropriateness of recovery action at certain times.

To participate in good team working practices and to demonstrate these whenever possible.

To attend meetings, working parties, user groups and seminars as required

To ensure both staff and public safety, by preventing and diffusing difficult situations and taking responsibility to escalate to Team Leaders or Revenue Manager where necessary

All duties should be carried out in an efficient, accurate and timely manner and in accordance with agreed procedures.

To comply with the Council's Code of Conduct and ensure all personal data is kept confidential in compliance with the Data Protection Act and that all relevant interests are declared to your line manager.

Any other duties commensurate with the grade of the post, as may be required from time to time, including attending meetings outside normal working hours.

Person Specification

Job Title: Enforcement Officer	Service Area:
Directorate: Finance	
Grade: H	Date last updated: October 2019

KNOWLEDGE:

Working knowledge of relevant debt collection legislation, in particular Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Enforcement.

Working knowledge of the Taking Control of Goods legislation and fee structure and the levy and removal process.

Proven ability to achieve high levels of customer care and knowledge of welfare rights.

Knowledgeable of the National Standards for Enforcement Agents and abide by those standards and the relevant Civil Procedure Rules

Working knowledge of Health & Safety regulations and Lone Working Policy

QUALIFICATIONS:

Must hold a current Enforcement Agent certificate and be a qualified Enforcement Agent in accordance with the Taking Control of Goods regulations 2014 and must be certificated under the Certification of Enforcement Agents Regulations 2014

Hold a current driving licence

EXPERIENCE:

Experience of levying distress or similar.

Experience of dealing with debtors enquiries in an Enforcement Agent collection environment or similar and of discussing debt repayment solutions with customers

SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

Able to communicate effectively

Able to manage risk to prevent escalation and deterioration of situations whilst dealing with debtors

Ability to represent the Council when dealing with members of the public

Ability to deal with difficult and challenging people and diffuse situations

Ability to prioritise work and to meet set deadlines

Ability to work on own initiative and decide the action necessary to complete allocated work

Ability to attend and represent the Council at court hearings or similar practices

Ability to liaise with staff of all departments, customer representatives or external organisations

A commitment to customer care and quality issues

Ability to use a computerised debt collection system.

Be able to demonstrate good numerical and literacy skills, basic administration.

Ability to work to targets (minimum number of calls)

Possess a high level of self-motivation and able to work unsociable hours (between 6am –and 9 pm)

PERSONAL STYLE AND BEHAVIOUR:

An appreciation of the need to respect the feelings of both staff and public

Knows when to draw matters to the attention of management but always seek to provide solutions to problems and prepared to make decisions

Responds promptly and positively to customer requirements in a helpful and courteous manner

Monitors outcomes and learns from experience

Demonstrates high standards of integrity, honesty and fairness

Sensitive to the needs of others, while recognising the need to maintain service standards

Actively committed to equality in service provision and employment

Resilient and adaptable

OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

The applicant / post holder must possess a valid Enforcement Agent certificate and hold a current valid UK driving licence.

The applicant must have the use of and access to a car for enforcement duties and have adequate insurance cover to facilitate this. The Council will pay an essential car user allowance on top of the annual salary to cover this usage as well as a mileage allowance.