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**Job Description**

Job Title: General Rights Adviser

Responsible to: Head of Advice and Support Service

Location: Various positions based in the STEP Offices: Magherafelt / Cookstown / Dungannon

Salary Starting at £25,350 for appropriately qualified and experienced.

\*Opportunities available for individuals not qualified with relevant experience

Pension 5% Employers contribution to pension

Hours: 37.5hrs per week. These will normally be worked between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Mon-Fri. Evening work and weekend work may be required occasionally.

\*We may consider part time hours for the right candidate.

Probationary Period: The probation period for this post is 6 months.

Allowances: Travel and subsistence expenses are paid, in accordance with STEP travel and subsistence policy, when the post holder is absent from the organisation’s premises on the organisation’s business.

Travel to work allowance A Travel to work allowance will be available if the candidate travel to work distance exceeds 40 miles.

Holidays: 36 days inclusive of stat. holidays. (16 days statutory/public holidays (\*17 days public holidays in 2022) as identified in the STEP employee manual and annual leave of 20 working days each year) based on 37.5 hours per week contract.

Flexibility The post holder is expected to be responsive to STEP policies, priorities and the changing needs of the organisation and will be expected to adapt their workload as required.

Start Date: Immediate vacancy

**Summary of Role**

To provide information, guidance and advice to the resident population of Mid Ulster requesting this support from STEP across a range of enquires. These include but are not limited to enquiries relating to:

• Welfare Benefits – all types

• Debt

• Housing

• Immigration

• Legal rights

• Family issues

• Employment rights

• Education advice

• Health and mental health

• Tax

• Consumer

• Advocacy

The general advisor is not required to have specialist knowledge in these areas but should be competent in providing accurate, appropriate and relevant information and advice at the first stage of resolving the query.

STEP provides advisors with access to resources; up-to-date information and support enabling them to fulfil their role.

**Key Responsibilities**

You will be required to:

Accurately identify, assess and record the nature and urgency of the enquiry.

Assess the welfare / wellbeing support needs of the enquirer and provide information, support and advice.

Access available information, knowledge and resources to respond to enquiries accurately and effectively and in a timely manner.

Provide advocacy and undertake casework as required, including assisting in support to complete applications, complaints in paper or on-line format.

Refer customers to other sources of information, guidance or advice where appropriate, ensuring referrals are made in such a way as to enable the person making the enquiry to access the next stage. Follow up accordingly ensure the client query is appropriately addressed.

Work flexibly in a multi-channel environment to provide an efficient and effective service that meets the information and support needs (including emotional support needs) of those seeking support, demonstrating understanding and empathy.

Contribute to managing customer enquiries within the advice team.

Assess the social security support needs of customers and provide information, support and advice.

Provide information and advice on benefits entitlement; income maximisation and the NI Benefits/Welfare system.

Provide practical guidance on claiming specific benefits, including welfare eligibility checking, full benefits checks, grant eligibility assessment

Be responsible for maintaining awareness of current topical issues including wider legislative developments and understanding the implications of these for customers of the service.

Work in line with agreed quality and customer service standards

Provide follow-up support to customers.

Comply with industry quality standards (Advice quality standard adherence)

Contribute to ongoing service development ensuring that the support we provide meets the evolving needs of clients.

Maximise the collection of data on customer records in accordance with agreed standards of documentation and data protection

Be familiar with and adhere to all relevant organisational policies and procedures at all times.

Any other duties as reasonably required in line with skills, knowledge and experience to contribute to the organisation’s wider success.

**To undertake this role, you will need to have or be willing to develop:**

Customer enquiry handling skills, including the ability to navigate, signpost and provide information, including on the welfare benefits system to and on behalf of the person making the enquiry / seeking advice.

An understanding and appreciation of the needs of the customer and the importance of a customer focused service

Sufficient knowledge and ability to provide up-to-date, accurate and concise advice as outlined in the role description

Ability to accurately and appropriately retrieve information from relevant sources including electronic databases and the Internet.

Knowledge and understanding of the legal requirements around data protection, confidentiality & safeguarding.

Excellent verbal and written communication skills

Proficiency in the use of organisational recording systems to meet the needs of both the person seeking information and advice; and the organisational reporting requirements

Experience of using the MS Office

Experience of working in a customer- facing environment and advice setting

Experience of liaising, mediating and negotiating with government departments on behalf of customers

Emotional intelligence, including the ability to provide empathetic support and handle emotionally complex situations in a professional and supportive way, maintaining appropriate boundaries and adhering to relevant policies and guidance.

**In this role, you will work with different people and teams:**

**Internally:**  Housing and Homelessness; Family Support team; Community Infrastructure; Welfare Rights teams; Mental Health Support team; Prevention of Destitution / Hardship; Line manager; Senior management team

**Externally:** HMRC; Jobs & Benefit; DfC Social Security teams; NIHE; Housing Associations; Labour Relations Agency; a range of Voluntary and Community organisations including Advice NI; Housing Rights NI; Law Centre NI; Consumer Council; Disability Action and other specialist advisors; Jobs & Benefits; Tribunal Service.

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

**Essential Criteria:**

Qualifications, knowledge and & experience

You Must:

* Have a good level of general education including Maths and English
* Hold a Generalist Qualification at level 3 provided by Advice NI, Law Centre NI or equivalent
* Have a minimum of 6 months proven experience (paid or unpaid) in welfare advice work

Technical Skills

You must:

* have demonstrated capacity to use ICT as an integral part of your everyday work.
* Be able to prepare and present persuasive evidence-based argument.
* Have excellent organisational, communication and report writing skills
* Good IT skills – especially word-processing, and database entry

**Please note STEP routinely uses Microsoft & Advice Pro packages. If you are not already familiar with these, you will be required to be sufficiently ICT competent to adapt to using them within your first 4 weeks of employment.**

**Desirable Criteria**

You hold an additional accreditation at level 3 or 4 in a second area of specialised advice e.g. money advice & debt; consumer rights; employment rights; housing; immigration