



Finance (Revenues and Benefits) Policy Officer Recruitment Information Pack



Closing Date: Tuesday 27th July 2021(9:00am)

Interview Date: Tuesday 10th August 2021

Finance (Revenues and Benefits) Policy Officer

Salary: Grade 5 – SCP 33-41 (£36,922-44,863)
Term: Full Time for up to 2 Years
Reports to: Director of Resources
Based: One Canal Parade, Cardiff & Homeworking

Politically Restricted: Yes

Welsh Language essential: No. The ability to speak and write fluently is desirable for this role.

About the Role

The Finance (Revenue and Benefits) Policy Officer post is an important role for the WLGA, working with local authorities on a range of finance related issues. A new Welsh Government will bring forward a work programme with significant implications for local government finances and locally administered benefits. This will pose significant challenges in a devolved setting on top of the UK Government's programme of welfare reforms. Amongst other reforms, these currently focus around the implementation of Universal Credit, ongoing changes to housing benefit legislation, refinement of the council tax reduction scheme, and proposals for devolved and local taxation.. Reform of this scale presents huge risks and challenges in ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our society are adequately provided for. It also impacts upon a range of devolved policy areas including housing and homelessness prevention, social inclusion, social justice and child poverty.

The purpose of this post is to:

- be the lead contact for local authorities on all matters relating to revenues & benefits and provide advice, briefings and reports to elected members, primarily those who sit on the WLGA Executive Board and WLGA Council, and act as a strategic link between officer networks such as the Society of Welsh Treasurers.
- support local authorities in preparation for the Managed Migration to Universal Credit.
- support local authorities to manage changes to their workforce to enable them to fulfil their obligations under their partnership arrangements for Universal Credit.
- support and enable authorities to prepare for changes - shaping policy with governments at Wales and UK-level and as far as is practicable, take positive steps to mitigate any negative impacts.
- contribute to and monitor proposals for changes to local and devolved taxes that will impact on local revenues support local authorities with reference to Anti-Poverty measures and Income Maximisation.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- To keep updated on all aspects of the welfare reform programme (and other related reforms) with a specific focus on the development of delivery mechanisms for Universal Credit.

- To assess and report on potential implications of the changes to welfare reform, specifically with a view for implications for local authorities and implications/dependencies in a devolved setting.
- To advise elected members and officers on the Welsh Government's programme in relation to local taxation reform and potential newly devolved taxes.
- To ensure local authorities are kept informed about changes to benefits and local taxation illustrating the potential implications on their role as a service provider and employer through regular detailed briefings, reports and seminars.
- To assist local authorities in preparing for any changes, encouraging a pro-active response enabling mitigating actions as appropriate and providing support and guidance where needed.
- Assimilation of large, complex policy documents (often confidential) and production of clear, succinct briefings identifying key issues, key risks and highlighting action required by Welsh local government, WLGA and Welsh Government.
- To establish positive relationships and liaison with Welsh local government representatives, Welsh Government, DWP, LGA, COSLA, Society of Welsh Treasurers, and other similar bodies.
- To work with WLGA and Welsh Government staff as appropriate to support the work they are undertaking in responding to welfare reform and local taxation changes.
- To work with local authority staff leading on benefits and local taxation and those appointed to work within authorities on mitigating impact and maximising income.
- Coordination and support of WLGA's activities in response to the political change, including ensuring relevant WLGA staff and advisors are kept up to date and assisting them in ensuring wider briefing of Welsh local government and Welsh Government.
- Attending and coordinating attendance of representatives for Welsh Local Government at DWP, WG and other liaison groups and to attend appropriate meetings as required.
- To carry out any other duties within the scope of the grading of the post, as directed by the Chief Executive.

Person Specification

Essential

Knowledge & Experience

- A thorough knowledge and understanding of the current benefits and local taxation systems and the potential changes due to continuing welfare reforms and a new programme for government in Wales.
- Knowledge of local government funding in Wales and a good understanding of the political and devolved nature of Wales.
- Understanding of the political environment and the key issues, priorities and pressures affecting local government in particular the governance, improvement and/or policy agenda.
- Experience of working with senior officers, senior elected members or senior board members.
- Experience of leading successful projects/programmes, particularly within financial management, human resources, organisational development, governance, improvement or the transformation arena.
- Proven ability to collaborate, building and maintaining effective relationships and partnerships.
- Assimilation and interpretation of information and policy documents.

- Production of updates, briefings and consultation responses.
- Experience of working in partnership with a range of organisations.
- Maintaining accurate records of activity for monitoring purposes.
- Experience of policy development or the wider welfare system would be an advantage.

Skills & Abilities

- Political sensitivity and the ability to exercise appropriate discretion and judgement when dealing with elected members and senior officers.
- Confident and resilient with excellent people skills, able to develop positive internal and external relationships.
- Credibility with senior elected members, senior officers and stakeholders.
- Ability to work on one's own initiative as well as part of a team and ability to manage a range of concurrent projects, programmes or priorities Excellent written and oral communication skills, with ability to draft reports and present complex concepts clearly and critical messages in a constructive and sensitive manner.
- Analytical skills and experience of applying these skills in practice.
- Intellectually agile and innovative, capable of translating new ideas into policy and practice and ability to influence and negotiate.
- Demonstrates an enthusiastic and positive attitude, including self-motivation, determination and resilience.
- Ability to function effectively within a high-pressure environment.
- Confident, enthusiastic presentational skills and abilities.
- Able to produce accurate written and concise material on time.
- Ability to maintain filing and diary systems to ensure prompt retrieval of records and information.
- Able to analyse relevant data and apply analytical skills to a range of practical problems.
- Ability to work within and as part of a team to deliver programmes of change.
- Computer literacy with knowledge of Microsoft Office products.
- Research skills.

Attitude and Motivation

- Understanding of and a commitment to diversity, equalities and local democracy.
- Commitment to personal and professional development.

Other

- Willingness and ability to travel across Wales and other parts of the UK as necessary.
- Prepared and willingness to work weekends and evenings if required.

Desirable

Skills and Aptitude

- Welsh language verbal and written skills.
- Full UK driving licence.

Attitude and Motivation

- Willingness to learn Welsh.
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About the WLGA

The Welsh Local Government Association represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales.

Our aim is to **promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government** and the interests of local authorities in Wales.

We are a politically led, cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. The WLGA is a membership organisation that represents all 22 local authorities in Wales, the 3 fire and rescue authorities and the 3 national park authorities as associate members.

We believe that services are best provided within a democratic framework of local accountability and that the people who use public services should have as much of a say in the way they are organised, managed and funded as possible. Local government is seen as being the tier of government closest to service users and best able to respond to their needs. We support the role of the Welsh Government in setting the strategy for public services nationally but believe that it is down to local government to interpret strategy to deliver services based on local circumstances and local priorities.

Much of our work is focused on the Senedd (formerly the National Assembly for Wales), the Welsh Government and other national stakeholders and partners. We also liaise with the Wales Office and UK Government and work closely with the LGA in London in seeking to influence non-devolved policies and legislation and, in particular, the recovery from COVID 19 and responding to developments around Brexit.

Our work involves engagement with Ministers, Members of the Senedd, and other national and governmental organisations. We promote the important role of local government to Members of the Senedd and seek to enhance and protect councils' reputation and secure positive change to legislation. The WLGA's lobbying work is therefore extensive.

Our Values

In working towards its primary purposes, we seek to be:

- **Ambitious** in our expectations and in our vision for local democracy and local services;
- **Accountable** to our members and member authorities;
- **Proactive** in our defence and promotion of local democracy, our policy development and our engagement with members;
- **Receptive** through listening to and considering the range of views of our membership, partners and stakeholders;
- **Responsive** through our services and support to our members and member authorities;
- **Collaborative** in our approach to governance and partnership working with Welsh Government and other stakeholders.

We also work towards upholding and promoting equality, diversity and human rights; including promoting diversity in democracy and supporting councillors in their role as democratically elected local representatives.

We are committed to equality and fairness and although we are not a statutory body, we operate in the spirit of legislation such as the Equalities Act, Freedom of Information Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Our Aims and Priorities

Our priorities are underpinned by our core aims to secure:

- **Reform, continuous improvement and a commitment to partnership** - we believe in local government reform and seeking continuous improvement as a process for delivering better outcomes and services for the people of Wales, and in ensuring that resources are used as effectively and as efficiently as possible;
- **Fair and flexible funding** – councils need greater fiscal autonomy and flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities. Specific grants should be transferred into the settlement, after an agreed period of time, and the Welsh Government should fully cost and fund any new national initiatives and/or legislation and should commit to multiyear financial settlements, so councils can plan more effectively;
- **Commitment to the principle of Subsidiarity** – the Welsh Government and the Senedd should commit to the European Charter of Local Self Government and the principle of subsidiarity, where the presumption is that power is transferred to the level of government closest to the people. The Welsh Government has a clear national strategic role, but councils want to see momentum behind the devolution of powers beyond Cardiff Bay to local government and to local communities.



We will also:

- **Promote the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders**, emphasising their equal democratic mandate with national politicians.
 - **Ensure maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance** where councils and regions have flexibility in determining regional priorities, services and governance arrangements.
 - **Promote sector-led improvement**, with an emphasis around digital and innovation, supporting authorities in sharing best practice, developing workforce skills and developing a new corporate peer review programme.
 - **Encourage a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity** and enhanced democratic engagement and supporting councillors' development and training.
 - **Support authorities to effectively manage their workforce** through our role as the Employers' Organisation.
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Benefits: Working at the WLGA

The WLGA is an exciting place to work.

The WLGA is in the process of reviewing its office accommodation, with a view to retaining a Cardiff-based office with increased homeworking from September 2021.

We seek to offer staff a friendly, supportive and flexible working environment and staff are entitled to a range of benefits including:

- Incremental pay rises and contributory local government pension scheme
- 26 days annual leave, rising to 29 after 3 years then rising to 32 after 5 years of service, plus 8 days bank holiday
- Agile working policy which encompasses Flexitime, flexible working including options to work from home.
- Cycle to work scheme, travel loan facilities and free staff car park
- A range of supportive policies, including career breaks, job share, leave purchase scheme and other leave arrangements.
- Generous maternity, adoption, paternity and shared parental leave
- Centrally located office in the heart of one of the UK's most vibrant cities

Terms of Employment

Association employees are employed on the conditions of service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, amended by local agreements. The principal provisions are outlined below:

Salary:

Salary is payable calendar monthly by bank credit on or about the 15th of each month.

Hours of Work:

The working week is 36 hours. Office opening hours are 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday although the demands of the post may necessitate a variable working pattern.

Flexible Working Time:

The Association offers a flexi time policy to all grades up to Head of Policy Level.

Travel and Subsistence:

It is a condition of appointment that staff will be prepared to work on occasion anywhere within Wales, the rest of the United Kingdom or Europe. Travelling and subsistence expenses will be payable, in accordance with the Association's scheme, when staff work away from their fixed centre.

Annual Leave:

The annual leave entitlement for a full year (the leave year runs from 1 April to 31 March in the following year) will initially be 26 days, in addition to statutory holidays. Existing local government employers may attract additional leave based on continuous local government service.

Pension:

The successful candidate will automatically be admitted to the Local Government Pension Scheme. This is a contributory scheme which has defined benefits for employees.

<https://mpfmembers.org.uk/content/members-currently-contributing-lgps>

Period of Notice:

The period of notice which staff are required to give is one calendar month, commencing on any day in the month. Staff will also be entitled to receive one calendar months' notice, or the current statutory notice period, whichever is greater.

Terms of Secondment (if applicable):

The successful candidate will remain an employee of their current employer which, will continue to pay their salary and the Association will reimburse the salary to the employer. In addition, their terms and conditions of employment will remain unchanged. The Association will reimburse business travel and expenses incurred on secondment. Interested applicants will need to be aware of their organisation's secondment policy and obtain prior approval of their employer.

WLGA Politically Restricted Posts:

The WLGA will not appoint as an employee or worker in any capacity, any Councillor who is currently a Member (including co-opted member) of a local Authority or any other member body of the WLGA e.g. National Park Authority or who had been a Member in the previous 12 months (s.116 Local Government Act (LGA) 1972).

The following posts are considered to be politically restricted (in line with those local authority roles as specified in Section 2(1) of the 1989 Act¹:

- All members of Senior Management Team
- All officers paid above Spinal Point 30
- Other officers giving advice to local authorities on a regular basis
- Any officers with a role which involves speaking on behalf of the WLGA to the media.

The Association is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

¹ Part I of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Politically Restricted Posts) (Wales) Regulations 2008

Apply Now!

For an initial discussion about the role and the organisation, please contact Jon Rae, Director of Resources on 07979018007.

To apply, please send a covering letter with a completed application form by the closing date of 27th July 2021 (9:00am) to:

HR Manager

e-mail recruitment@wlga.gov.uk

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 10th August 2021.

Shortlisted applicants may be requested to undertake a task before attending for interview, as well as pre-interview tasks on the day, followed by an interview with a selection panel.