

**ROLE DESCRIPTION**

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| **JOB TITLE** | **POST NUMBER** |
| **Housing Options Officer** | **D3004,D3005, D3006, D3007, D3016, D3017, D3027** |
| **DIRECTORATE** | **LOCATION** |
| Housing / Communities | Council Offices, Hailsham / Hybrid |
| **GRADE** | **OTHER ALLOWANCES** |
| WDC 5 | Essential Car User Allowance |
| **KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS** | **INTERNAL/EXTERNAL** |
| **Who will I be working with?** | **Internal -** Head of Housing, Housing Strategy & Development Manager, Housing Options Team Leader, staff in the housing service and other departments of the Council. Members of the Council.  **External -** Members of the public, County and District Councils, Registered Social Landlords, other statutory and voluntary organisations and other agencies concerned with the duties of the housing service and related matters. |
| **STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES/LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY** | |
| **What am I accountable for?**  **What are the consequences for me or the council?**  **This covers JE Criteria D (Accountability)** | To provide an effective, professional homelessness service on behalf of the Council including offering a full range of advice on housing options in the private and public sector and ensure comprehensive homelessness prevention service, including developing updating and reviewing Personal Housing Plans. To assess and investigate homeless applications in line with the Council’s statutory duties under Housing Act 1996 Part 7 and relevant case law. |
| **DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY** (INDEPENDENCE) | |
| **What actions can I take independently?**  Undertake assessments of household circumstances, making thorough and relevant enquiries into the tests of homelessness and make correct, evidence based decisions under Part VII Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This could be in a variety of settings including at the Council Offices, home visits, telephone/video call, hospital or other community setting.  Deliver clear and tailored housing advice to residents both verbally and in writing, including applications to the Council’s Housing Register and to those not eligible for Homelessness assistance or to join the Housing Register.  Write clear and concise reports, housing plans, case notes and decision letters.  Undertake risk assessments to protect staff, applicants, residents and the wider public in an accommodation setting.  Using excellent negotiation skills, liaise with a range of organisations and companies such as Advocates, Legal Centres, Landlords, Citizens Advice, local support and advice services, banks/building societies, police and DWP.  To request and facilitate the placement of households into temporary accommodation when a duty is triggered in line with current legislation, guidance and procedures.  Ensure the effective and best use of temporary accommodation, having regard to the suitability of the accommodation to the household and the cost to the Council.  Arrange for personal property and belongings to be placed into storage in line with relevant legislation, guidance and procedures.  Assess applications for financial assistance and securing a tenancy in the PRS, ensuring the best use of funds, affordability and other criteria are met.  To investigate allegations of harassment and illegal eviction as defined by the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 & Protection from Harassment act 1997.  Evaluate own skills and knowledge, identifying any training needs.  **When do I need to involve others?**  Contribute to the development and improvement of the Council’s Housing Options service.  Take a collaborative and holistic approach to supporting residents in housing need, covering a range of issues relating to housing problems, homelessness and associated issues involving a professional multi-disciplinary team.  Seek approval from a Senior Officer for certain functions, including temporary accommodation placements and financial payments.  Trigger safeguarding investigations with the appropriate agencies when concerns arise relating to vulnerable individuals. | |
| **JOB PURPOSE** (COMPLEXITY) | |
| 1. **Why does this job exist?** To provide an effective, customer-friendly and efficient service to clients presenting with housing problems; to support them in keeping their current home or in accessing a new home in the public or private housing sector. 2. To advise clients on full range of options to solve their housing problem, including intervention if threatened with homelessness, accessing the private rented sector, registering on the housing register, mutual exchange for Council tenants, shared ownership and any other housing solution. 3. To provide a professional and effective housing options interview and homelessness investigation service for those homeless or threatened with homelessness; making a full assessment of the housing and support needs of the presenting household, issuing personalised housing plans (PHPs) to prevent and relieve homelessness irrespective of the customer’s priority need or intentionality status. This Plan will ensure that homelessness is prevented or relieved through active engagement with council and private sector services. 4. To manage own case load from triage (initial assessment), to interview, PHP, keeping the PHP under review and managing tasks set for the client and council to achieve prevention and relief options through to a successful outcome. 5. To provide advice services to clients through face to face or telephone interviews, written correspondence and home visiting. 6. To promote the use of the private rented sector by actively seeking accommodation on behalf of applicants, providing information about available accommodation and housing benefit entitlements and, where appropriate, by completing applications for assistance with deposits/rent in advance through the provision of deposit guarantees, loans and guarantor schemes. 7. To ensure that the Council’s duties under the homelessness legislation are properly discharged and that accommodation, including B&B accommodation in an emergency, is available for qualifying homeless households. 8. To use own initiative and creative thinking, to prevent and relieve homelessness for your case load. This includes making practical, innovative solutions outside of a housing context, to alleviate situations which threaten a housing situation. 9. To write and issue statutory notification letters under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, s.184 decision letters, letters of referral to other authorities where an applicant’s local connection lies elsewhere and all other statutory documents relating to homelessness. 10. To carry out enquiries in order to establish eligibility for the Council’s housing register and confirm the details provided by applicants to ensure that their relative priority has been properly determined in accordance with the Council’s approved Allocations scheme. 11. To comply with all relevant Housing legislation, statutory requirements, Codes of Guidance, case law, local policies and procedures, performance standards and homelessness prevention practice. 12. To maintain accurate written and computer records, reports and other monitoring information, such as government returns (H-CLIC), as required in connection with the various duties undertaken, and keep other records necessary to provide an adequate management information data base. 13. To develop effective working relationships with colleagues within the Housing service and other statutory and voluntary services, ensuring effective referrals are made for clients in need of support from other services under their PHP. 14. To advise clients of available tenancy support services including income maximisation, Discretionary Housing Payments, under occupation schemes, mutual exchange, debt and rent arrears advice and HB support. 15. To assist in developing full range of information and publicity for all clients as well as internal procedures. 16. To understand the value of information to the council and to contribute to good information governance by keeping information safe, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The officer is required to abide by the council’s information governance policies. 17. To be aware of Key Performance Indicators at both local and national level, and to help to ensure that targets are met wherever possible. 18. In the absence of the Housing Options Team Leader and/or other members of the team, to ensure that the essential work arising is adequately dealt with; 19. To participate in a duty rota as required 20. To undertake such other duties as the Head of Housing may require. 21. To abide by the Council’s Equal Opportunity Policy Statement which makes a commitment to promote equal opportunities and race equality in Wealden.   To act in accordance with the Council’s Health & Safety Policy to take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your work activity  **How does it contribute to the Council overall?**  The Council’s Housing Options service is a statutory function and fulfils the obligations set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended. | |

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| **ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| **What are the most important things I will be doing?**  To provide a professional and effective housing options interview and homelessness investigation service for those homeless or threatened with homelessness; making a full assessment of the housing and support needs of the presenting household, issuing personalised housing plans (PHPs) to prevent and relieve homelessness irrespective of the customer’s priority need or intentionality status. This Plan will ensure that homelessness is prevented or relieved through active engagement with council and private sector services. |
| **What other activities will I be responsible for?**  To provide an effective, customer-friendly and efficient service to clients presenting with housing problems; to support them in keeping their current home or in accessing a new home in the public or private housing sector. |
| **Will I be managing others?**  N/A |
| **Who do I report into?** Housing Options Team Leader |

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| **PROGRESSION & DEVELOPMENT** |
| **What are the development opportunities for me?**  Skills development / specialisms  Professional qualifications  Management opportunities  Networking |
| **How will I know I am being successful in this role?**  1 2 1s  Team Meetings  Appraisals  Statistical Performance  KPI’s HCLIC |
| **What is the required learning for me in this role?**  Housing and public / welfare law updates. Annual updates  Mandatory / compulsory training i.e. GDPR, WDC learning pool modules, other public sector requirements such as Equality Act, Human Rights Act etc. |

This is an outline job description designed to summarise the key responsibilities of the role and is not intended to cover every task that may be required. It may be subject to change to meet the evolving needs of the organisation.

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| **Additional Role Requirements** | |
| Standards of Conduct | You will be required to comply with the Council’s Standing Orders and Standing Financial Instructions, and at all times deal honestly with the Council, Members, Colleagues and all those who have dealings with the Council, including customers and suppliers.  You must behave with integrity, act lawfully and demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical values.  To positively demonstrate the Wealden values yourself and to continue to build the culture of the Wealden values through the appointment, management, appraisal and development of staff (as well as third party providers). |
| Health & Safety/Risk Management | Wealden District Council’s Health & Safety Policy and other safety procedures and guidelines are deemed part of this job description. Employees must look after their own health, safety and welfare and be mindful of other persons who may be affected by their acts. Employees must co‑operate and comply with management instructions regarding H&S issues and report all accidents, incidents and problems to their supervisor, manager or other senior members of staff, in line with the H&S policies.  You will need to be compliant with the Council’s risk management policies and procedures. These describe the Council’s commitment to risk management, the recognition that our aim is to protect colleagues and visitors from harm, and stress that all colleagues have a responsibility to minimise risk. |
| Governance Standards | Comply with the relevant governance standards applicable to the Council as communicated to the post-holder from time to time. |
| Data Protection | To comply with Council Policies and the Data Protection Act in all respects, with particular relevance to the protection and use of staff and customer information. |
| Confidentiality | Council colleagues are required to ensure that information about customers and staff is safeguarded to maintain confidentiality and is kept securely in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18). The Council’s Data Security and Protection policy ICT policies provide guidance on how this can be achieved. |
| Communication | To encourage innovation and positive challenge through effective involvement, motivation and communication with Officers, Members, Partners and other Stakeholders, actively promoting the Council’s reputation and image as an employer of choice. |
| Digital/  Records Management | To direct the identification, development and implementation of digital and other systems and procedures which are aligned to the Council’s Drive to Digital Strategy and are shaped to reflect our customers’ and stakeholders’ needs.  To maintain Council customer and staff records (both paper and electronic) in accordance with Council policies. |
| Freedom of  Information | To provide advice and assistance to all persons who propose to make, or have made requests for information, and to ensure all requests for information are managed appropriately in accordance with Council Freedom of Information procedures. |
| Security | To comply with Council policies to ensure there is a safe and secure environment that protects Members, staff and visitors and their property, and the physical assets and the information of the organisation. |
| Other duties | Participate in such non-routine duties as elections and Emergency Planning as directed by the Chief Executive to include, where appropriate, the setup of a Rest Centre. |
| Freedom to Speak Up  (Whistleblowing) | You have responsibility for customer and staff welfare and should raise any concerns relating to a breach of Council policies and procedures with your manager or refer to HR for alternative options. |
| Environmental Impact | You will ensure compliance with the Council’s environmental management policies and procedures. These describe the Council’s commitment to climate change and carbon management, the recognition that our aim is to protect the environment and the use of natural resources that all staff have a responsibility towards. |
| Performance review | This Job Description will be used as a basis for individual performance review between you and your line manager.  The Job Description covers only the key result areas and, as such, does not intend to provide a comprehensive list of objectives. Specific objectives will be reviewed each April and may develop to meet the changing needs of the service. You will need to take due account, in the way they achieve the key result areas, of Council policies and procedures. |
| Equality and Diversity | To take responsibility and comply with the Council’s Equal Opportunities policy (which makes a commitment to promote equal opportunities and equality of all protected characteristics in Wealden), Officers’ Code of Conduct, Data Protection and other relevant policies, procedures and legislation, to ensure these are embedded and applied throughout the service in both service provision and employment issues. |

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| **PERSON SPECIFICATION** |

| **CRITERIA** | **ATTRIBUTES** | **ESSENTIAL** | **DESIRABLE** | **ASSESSED BY**  **Application Form / Interview / Practical Assessment** |
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| **Knowledge & Experience** | Considerable work experience in housing options, homelessness, housing support, social care, tenancy sustainment or other equivalent experience |  |  |  |
| Knowledge of relevant landlord and tenant legislation including security of tenure and private tenants’ rights |  |  |  |
|  | A good knowledge of services, welfare benefits and local support available to applicants experiencing housing problems |  |  |  |
|  | Must hold a current full driving licence unless alternative arrangements are available. |  |  |  |
|  | Confident and assertive and unafraid to challenge expectation, without being confrontational. |  |  |  |
| **Skills** | Must be able to work both as an individual and as part of a team. Effective record keeping, IT competent and able to use computer software effectively. Ability to prioritise workload and support team members where necessary, in a busy environment. |  |  |  |
| Excellent communication and interpersonal skills including the ability to deal objectively but sympathetically with customers in high stress situations while assessing their situations with regard to national legislation. |  |  |  |
| An ability to understand, interpret and convey complex information, including legal information and processes. |  |  |  |
| **Qualifications/**  **Education** | 5 GCSEs grade C or above including Maths and English (or equivalent qualification or experience) |  |  |  |
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