

**ROLE DESCRIPTION**

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| **JOB TITLE** | **POST NUMBER** |
| **Homelessness Prevention Officer** | **D3023** |
| **DIRECTORATE** | **LOCATION** |
| Community Services | Hailsham/Homeworking |
| **GRADE** | **OTHER ALLOWANCES** |
| WDC3 | Essential Car User Allowance |
| **KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS** | **INTERNAL/EXTERNAL** |
| **JE Criteria G Relationships:** This factor takes account of the degree of people contact in the context of internal/external, the level and the nature. | **Internal -** Head of Housing, Housing Options & Strategy Manager, Housing Options Team Leader, Housing Register & Lettings Team Leader, Housing Services 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 organizations and other agencies concerned with the duties of the housing service and related matters. |
| **STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES/LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY** | |
| **JE Criteria D Accountability:** The level of accountability is related to what extent the job holder is answerable for their actions and the consequences. It is important to recognise the difference between responsibility and accountability | This post does not have any line management responsibilities for staff.  The post holder will be responsible for managing a caseload.  The post holder will be responsible for providing advice and support to residents in relation to their housing circumstances to promote a positive outcome, therefore a sufficient level of confidence and skill will be required to ensure correct advice and support is given.  The post holder will be responsible for managing any risks including safeguarding concerns and following the Council’s policy and procedure for safeguarding adults and children. |
| **ROLE OVERVIEW** | |
| To provide an innovative, responsive, solution-focused service to people at risk of homelessness. The aim of this role is to intervene early to sustainably prevent homelessness and reduce the need for individuals needing to access further services in the future. The role is particularly focused on supporting people at risk of homelessness due to the threat of eviction by a family member or friend. The Homeless Prevention Worker will use a range of mediation techniques to ensure existing living arrangements can be sustained as long as possible. The post-holder will take a person-centred approach, working collaboratively, imaginatively, and proactively as part of a network of housing options, well-being and employment services and organisations to prevent homelessness. This approach is seeking to reduce, to an absolute minimum, the number of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.  Provide housing applicants with comprehensive advice and information on the full range of housing options available to them, considering their needs and aspirations, and to proactively support them to find alternative accommodation, including accessing the private rented sector. | |
| **SERVICE OVERVIEW** | |
| The Housing Options team are a busy team that provides statutory housing advice and assistance to all of our residents and works to prevent homelessness in the District.  The team also provide advice and assistance to residents who require help in accessing suitable accommodation and assess statutory applications for housing and homelessness under Part 6 and Part 7 of the Housing act 1996 (as amended), fulfilling duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018. This includes advice for rough sleepers, gypsies and travellers and those leaving care, prisons, youth detention or hospital. As well as for those with mental health issues or suffering domestic abuse and former members of the armed forces.  Many of our residents have complex issues and are facing difficult circumstances, we are experiencing an increase in demand on our service which has amounted to a growing number of homeless presentations and people requiring support to sustain their homes during the first quarter of 2023. We also processed over 2000 applications to the Housing Register in 2022. | |

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| **ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| **JE Factors: C/D/E/F/H/J – Managerial & Supervisory Responsibility, Accountability, Independence of Action, Complexity and Direction, Pressure of Work**   * To intervene as early as possible when a risk of homelessness is identified, including before the formal prevention duty begins, to provide advice and support to reduce the risk of people needing to access further statutory services. This may include joint visits with partner agencies, to ensure housing issues have been fully considered. * Collaborate with housing, wellbeing and employment hubs and other support services to ensure a fast response to homelessness enquiries and home visits. * Undertake home visits to confirm that the applicant is residing in the property, assess the suitability of their accommodation for occupation and determine the reasons why they are at risk of becoming homeless, in order to assist the homelessness team in determining whether or not the applicant is homeless within the meaning of the homelessness legislation. Work constructively with other council departments where suspicions of fraud may be identified. * To assist the Housing Options Team in undertaking relevant enquiries into Homeless Applications under Part 7 Housing Act 1996, as amended. * Provide mediation and conflict resolution to understand and address the underlying causes of homelessness in each case. To communicate clearly to manage expectations about local housing conditions and realistic move on options and timescales. * Deliver a whole family approach to support, taking a holistic approach to the needs in each case to minimise evictions and sustain safe living arrangements for as long as possible. Assess housing applicants and provide support to their parents, relatives or friends (gathering information from a variety of other sources, as appropriate) to establish the reasons for the breakdown of their relationship and explore ways in which homelessness can be prevented through negotiation, problem-solving and/or referrals to professional mediation. * To provide intensive support to a small caseload of cases to ensure they can access move on accommodation in the private rented sector. Liaising with letting agents and seeking landlords directly. To work collaboratively with employability, wellbeing, housing hubs and local authority private rented sector teams to improve move on options. To utilise incentives available through the network and local authorities to sustain existing living arrangements or secure alternative accommodation. * To promote income generation and reduce the risk of eviction from Emergency and Temporary Accommodation placements through non-payment of rent/service charges by proactively encouraging payment plans and preventing the accrual of arrears. * To be involved in triaging applications for social housing by highlighting any customer vulnerability or urgency, to promote positive engagement with the housing application process and signposting and referring to other agencies/services for support where appropriate. * To maintain casework and other records and files in line with the performance requirements of the service, and at all times to ensure that clients are kept informed and clear records maintained. * To assist in the continuous improvement and development of a holistic housing options service by actively participating in team meetings and personal supervision. * Promote housing options as a means of preventing homelessness and ensuring, where appropriate, that housing applicants can make a successful move into a settled home without the need for them to move into temporary accommodation. * Develop innovative ways of preventing homelessness and avoiding the use of bed and breakfast. Negotiate with parents, relatives and friends to enable the applicant to remain in the home until an appropriate course of action can be agreed and implemented. * Actively participate in hub and co-location opportunities with partner services to strengthen multi-agency and cross-sector working. To work collaboratively as a virtual team to respond or cover needs in other local areas. * Maintain a good understanding of the Council’s policies and procedures for safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and people affected by domestic violence, and alert Children’s Services and/or Adult Social Care if it is suspected that a child or vulnerable adult might be being abused, neglected or harmed. * Provide intensive, flexible, person-centred support. Including undertaking follow-up visits and casework, ensuring that all cases are actively managed and monitored for as long as the Home Visiting Officer is continuing to work with the applicant. * Recognise personal and professional boundaries, work in a safe manner and contribute positively to the creation of a safe and healthy working environment, in accordance with the Council’s policies and procedures, to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements. * Ensure that all duties and services provided are in accordance with the council’s Equalities and Diversity policies and procedures. * Supporting the Housing Options Team Leader/Housing Options & Strategy Manager in order to ensure the delivery of a high quality, responsive and caring service. * To comply with individual responsibilities, in accordance with work role for health and safety in the workplace. This includes relevant legislation and policy in relation to information sharing and GDPR. * Undertake such other duties and tasks appropriate to the grade and character of work such as changes in information systems and new technology as may reasonably be required. Therefore, the above list of key result areas in this job description should not be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive. * To undertake such other duties as the Head of Housing may require. * 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. |

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. You will be expected to be flexible to respond to change and organisational need.

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| **Additional Information** | |
| 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.  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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| EVALUATION FACTOR GUIDE |
| **A – Education** You should identify the minimum requirements for the job for the job to be performed competently. |
| This factor relates to the level of education/formal training/qualification that indicate the "mental ability" required for the job to be performed competently. This does not necessarily mean that a specific jobholder has obtained the qualifications referred to (they may have acquired the knowledge by another route), nor that a specific jobholder has only the qualifications referred to. |
| **B - Proven Ability** This factor gauges the skills and aptitudes needed for the jobholder successfully to apply the mental ability assessed under Factor A so as to perform the job competently. |
| . These attributes may have been gained through successful exposure to work of a similar type or order, but may equally well have been acquired via some other route altogether. |
| **C - Managerial and Supervisory Responsibility** This takes account of the degree to which the job holder is expected to manage people and the requirement to perform or act in a specialist “advisory” capacity. |
| This factor examines managerial and staff responsibilities, with balance being struck between controlling a large number of staff carrying out routine tasks and a small team carrying out complex assignments requiring professional skills. It may also include staff without a formal management responsibility but who delegate some work to more junior staff. |
| **D - Accountability** The level of accountability is related to what extent the job holder is answerable for their actions and the consequences. It is important to recognise the difference between responsibility and accountability. |
| This factor examines accountability for operations, equipment, procedures and projects, some of which may not carry managerial or staff responsibilities. The level of responsibility is related to the impact of the job on end results and the consequence of errors. |
| **E - Independence of Action** This factor takes account of the freedom to act, the extent to which procedures are followed and the involvement/input into the formulation of strategy. |
| This factor examines the extent to which initiative can be used and decisions taken by job-holders. In essence, this covers freedom to operate. |
| **F - Complexity** This factor relates to the spread and types of different skills/activities involved in the job and considers the depth and degree of complexity required versus the routine nature of the job. |
| This factor examines the variety and diversity of tasks and challenges faced by the job-holder linked to the range of skills required. |
| **G - Relationships** This factor takes account of the degree of people contact in the context of internal/external, the level and the nature. |
| This factor examines the extent to which the work involves contact with people inside and outside the organisation, the level and importance of these contacts and the impact of the results of the relationship on the reputation and performance of the organisation. |
| **H - Direction** This factor assesses how the work is generated and the frequency of checking/review against progress. |
| This factor is akin to independence. It is, in fact, the opposite of independence and examines the constraints that are in place to act as a check on jobs. |
| **J - Pressure of Work** This factor relates to the mental and physical pressure. It is important to recognise that work volume is not considered within this factor. |
| This factor examines the mental and physical stress inherent in jobs. |
| **K - Working Environment** This factor takes account of the working conditions normally encountered when carrying out the job. A consistent assessment should be considered for discrete groups of employees. |
| This factor examines the physical environment within which jobs operate together with other physical factors, such as mileage, overseas travel etc. |

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| **PERSON SPECIFICATION** |

| **CRITERIA** | **ATTRIBUTES** | **ESSENTIAL** | **DESIRABLE** |
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| **Experience** | Significant proven experience of working in a housing related support role delivering advice & assistance, or at least two years’ experience delivering advice & assistance to customers in a non-housing related setting. | X |  |
| Experience of and a commitment to work within a comprehensive and inclusive equalities framework. | X |  |
|  | Previous experience in a mediation role. |  | X |
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| **Qualifications/**  **Education**  **JE Factor A** | Educated to English Language GCSE or equivalent at Grade 9 to 4/A+ to C, or sufficient work experience demonstrating the above. | X |  |
|  | Evidence of commitment to continuing personal professional development. |  | X |
| **Knowledge** | Knowledge and understanding of the causes of homelessness | X |  |
| Working knowledge of safeguarding in a homelessness context | X |  |
| Knowledge and understanding of tenancy law and housing legislation e.g. Housing Act 1996 Part VI and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 |  | X |
| **Skills and aptitudes**  **JE Factor B** | Effective mediation and diplomacy skills | X |  |
| Excellent communication skills, written and verbal and adapting communication style for different audiences and settings this may include landlords, partner services and clients | X |  |
| Confidence to improve access services, through home visits and outreach to people at risk of homelessness  Personal resilience and personal safety and welfare | X |  |
| A high standard of customer care, building rapport through regular contact and taking an empathetic and person centred approach | X |  |
|  | Ability to make comprehensive notes and compile informative reports to work cases through to conclusion providing a clear audit trail of activities throughout. Ability to remain calm under pressure. | X |  |
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| **Personal attributes** | Good IT skills and ability to use Microsoft Office packages. | X |  |
| Access to own vehicle to provide daily home visits across a wide geographic area. | X |  |
| Current clean drivers license and access to vehicle. |  | X |
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| **Managerial/**  **Leadership skills** |  |  |  |
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| **PERSONAL VALUES & BEHAVIOURS** | |
| **General Competencies** | |
| **Agile**  **Embracing & supporting change** | **Caring**  **Well being** |
| * Responds positively to change and has a ‘can do’ outlook * Constantly looking to improve what we do * Keeps up to date with job knowledge and undertakes learning and development * Learns from others and help other people learn | * Looking after each other’s wellbeing * Bringing a friendly, positive approach to work * Delivering the best possible outcome focussed service to our customers * Responds to customers positively, promptly and with courtesy |
| **High Performing**  **Performance focus** | **Together**  **Team working & effective** |
| * Committed to the work of our teams and of the Council * Carries out work with quality and accuracy * Focused on the clear goals we need to achieve * Making efficient and effective use of resources * Constantly striving to delivery best possible ‘value for money’ | * Actively building good working relationships within and across teams where appropriate * Offers help and co-operates with others to get the job done * Ensuring everyone knows what they need to know and hear it from the right source * Being open and transparent about what we are doing * Committed to two-way communication * Reflects and promotes Wealden’s culture and values |

**Management Competencies**

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| **Mandatory training standards** | **Other minimum core competencies and skills (where appropriate)** |
| * Performance Management (including appraisals) * Recruitment and Selection * Risk Management * Stress Management * Finance for budget holders * Sickness Absence monitoring * Grievance, Disciplinary & Capability Proceedings * Health and Safety * Ethics | * Coaching employees * Managing change * Managing employees who work remotely * Report writing * Presentation skills * Having that difficult conversation * Commercial awareness and acumen * Corporate * Decision making * Accountable |
| **Caring** | **High Performing** |
| * Understands customer needs * Regular 1-1s with employees (at least quarterly) * Gives recognition, praise and feedback to employees * Promotes and delivers a safe and healthy environment * Effective sickness absence management * Completion of job evaluation work * Supports new employees through induction and probation actions | * 100% completion of appraisals * Appraisal Action Plans reviewed * Effective budget management and control * Manager and employees attend mandatory training * Report writing is completed in a timely fashion |
| **Agile** | **Together** |
| * Actions from service reviews implemented * Employees in their team have the right skills & knowledge to do their job and deal with change * Reviewing ways to improve how we work and/or do things differently | * Regular team meetings and attendance (at least quarterly) * Communicating the Council’s Vision, Priorities and Service Objectives * Attendance at manager/conferences and employees briefings * Commitment to working in partnership |

**Leadership Competencies**

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| **Skills** | **Other Behaviour Standards** |
| * Leading the change process and people through change * Building personal resilience * Fostering innovation & commercial acumen * Developing ‘political’ awareness | * High Performing * Delivery of financial efficiency goals * Together * Engage with Members to enhance two way communications and keep relevant * Strong ethical and governance standards * Highly corporate |