

## Folkestone and Hythe District Council Job Description

JOB DETAILS	
<b>Job Title</b>	Housing Advice and Preventions Officer
<b>Service Area / Team</b>	Housing
<b>Reports to</b>	Housing Advice and Preventions Team Leader
<b>Grade &amp; Annual Salary</b>	Grade E/F
<b>Politically Restricted Post</b>	No
<b>DBS Requirement</b>	Enhanced

JOB PURPOSE
<p>To provide a comprehensive and effective housing advice and assistance service, focussing on the prevention of homelessness and a housing options approach. To promote and deliver homelessness prevention and broad range of housing options to clients, including ensuring the council fulfils its statutory homelessness duties where prevention is not possible.</p>

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under the direction of the Team Leader provide an efficient and effective Housing Advice and Preventions Service, following documented processes and procedures to ensure consistency of practice across the service</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide comprehensive housing advice and assistance to clients in all types of tenure.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To work proactively with clients to prevent homelessness wherever possible, through providing an advisory and advocacy role in areas such as: negotiating with families; negotiating with landlords or agents; providing debt advice and negotiating with lenders and liaising with other agencies and attending courts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To complete personalised Personal Housing Plans for applicants, using innovative ways to prevent homelessness, including drawing up agreements between landlords and tenants.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To interview and complete housing needs assessments with customers, in the office, by telephone or in their homes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To attend and participate in multi-agency meetings where housing is an issue for the customer. This will include amongst others: Child In Need, Child Protection, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and ASB Problem Solving Groups.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To offer advice and assistance to any client seeking accommodation on the availability of housing sources locally in the public and private sectors. Such</li> </ul>

<p>advice shall include the likelihood of rehousing under the Council's allocation scheme.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain comprehensive records and information on available housing options.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop links and liaise closely with a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies, individuals and companies, to maximise the supply and use of available accommodation sources. Such links will include: colleagues within the Council; the Department of Works &amp; Pensions; Probation Service; Housing Associations; Citizens Advice Bureau; letting agencies and private landlords.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To assist households who wish to make applications to the Council's Housing Register and to assist applicants with using the Kent choice based lettings scheme.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To investigate cases of actual or threatened homelessness and to fulfil the Council's statutory duties in respect of homeless applicants. To make recommendations to Housing Advice and Preventions Team Leader regarding the Council's responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To attend advice and options surgeries and outreach sessions as required, and to visit people who are threatened with homelessness at home as necessary.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support the Duty to Refer people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, who are unlikely to be owed a main Housing Duty by the Council, to relevant agencies for assistance with housing and any other issues impacting on their housing situation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To conduct outreach visits to prisons, hostels, hospitals or other locations to provide early intervention and prevention advice, as well as holding advice surgeries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide training and support to enable in-house staff and external agencies to identify early warning signs of homelessness and ways to prevent it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure accurate recording of statistical data in order for the Senior Homelessness Reviews and Service Improvement Officer and Team Leader to produce accurate statistical reports and returns. Monitor own performance targets and evidence thorough casework.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make decisions on when and where homeless households will be placed into temporary accommodation, ensuring the correct interim and temporary accommodation procedures are followed, including bookings, completion of placement paperwork, regular monitoring household is using accommodation appropriately and for the ending of accommodation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To refer households to Children and Families Social Services as per guidance in the Housing Act 1996 and the Children's Act 2004.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To gather evidence regarding incidents of harassment and illegal eviction as defined within the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To assist in implementing, monitoring, and reviewing the effectiveness of initiatives developed under the Homelessness Strategy including taking responsibility for specific areas of work within the team as directed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To work collaboratively with the Housing Accommodation team to support appropriate re-housing solutions for people in order to prevent homelessness or meet statutory housing duties.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To carry out welfare checks on unauthorised encampments in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Team.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop and maintain an up-to-date knowledge of the legislation and Council policy in relation to the following issues: homelessness; children; landlord/tenant; matrimonial; domestic violence; and housing and welfare benefits.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To undertake project work relating to the prevention of homelessness and the housing options available to those in housing need.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To liaise with the police on domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour cases. To also liaise with mental health teams to obtain customer's care plans and risk assessments when appropriate.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be responsible for managing a caseload; identifying priorities; monitoring referrals; maintaining statistics; keeping accurate written and electronic records; writing reports and replying to correspondence.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To respond to complaints/enquiries on individual cases or other areas of the post in-line with documented procedures.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To assist the Team Leader and other housing sections with the induction/training of new staff by mentoring and job shadowing.</li> </ul>

## **CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhere to the council's safeguarding policies and procedures and undertake relevant training in order to help protect children and vulnerable adults within the district.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To comply with legislation, council policies and procedures including the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Information Security Policy, the Code of Conduct for Officers and to participate in any Emergency Planning activities as required.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To actively demonstrate the values and behaviours of the council.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure our customers are valued by taking into account their views and needs in all that we do.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To contribute to the development and achievement of relevant corporate and service objectives by suggesting ideas for service improvements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To communicate openly and honestly with colleagues, members and customers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To undergo any training necessary to be able to fulfil the requirements of the job.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To carry out other duties commensurate with the grade, skills, experience and qualifications of the post holder as directed and as may be required from time to time.</li> </ul>

## Folkestone and Hythe District Council Person Specification

### Post Title: Housing Advice and Preventions Officer

<b>Important Information for Applicants:</b>	
<p>The criteria listed in this person specification are the requirements for the post. Where the method of assessment is stated to be the application form, your application needs to demonstrate clearly and concisely how you meet each of the criteria, even if other methods of assessment are also shown. If you do not address these criteria fully, you may not be shortlisted. Please give specific examples wherever possible.</p>	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
<b>Qualifications</b>	<p><b>Essential (Level 1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GCSE A-C or equivalent in maths and English, or recent and relevant experience that demonstrates proficiency in maths and English.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Desirable (Level 2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A Level 4 Chartered Institute of Housing recognised qualification or significant relevant experience in a similar role.</li> </ul>
<b>Experience and Knowledge</b>	<p><b>Essential (Level 1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrable recent and relevant experience within a Housing context or related field including undertaking homeless enquiries and issuing relevant decisions and/or undertaking housing reviews.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrable current knowledge and application of legislation relevant to the role including the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housing Act 1988</li> <li>○ Landlord &amp; Tenant Act 1985</li> <li>○ Parts 6 &amp; 7 of the Housing Act 1996 amended by the Homelessness Act 2002</li> <li>○ Protection From Eviction Act 1977</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Experience of achieving performance targets and meeting departmental objectives.</li> <li>▪ Knowledge of public and private sector housing options.</li> <li>▪ Experience of working with advice and support services relevant to the department's customers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Experience of dealing with difficult and vulnerable clients or customers, both face to face and over the phone.</li> <li>▪ Experience of operating MS Office systems such as Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook.</li> <li>▪ Use of bespoke systems such as Humme.</li> <li>▪ Experience of investigating and determining homelessness applications.</li> <li>▪ Experience of delivering homelessness prevention support.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrable current knowledge of welfare benefits.</li> </ul> <p><b>Desirable (Level 2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Significant relevant experience in a similar role.</li> <li>▪ Highly developed level of knowledge, understanding relevant legislation with the ability to apply it to current caseload.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrable understanding of legal proceedings in relation to housing.</li> <li>▪ A good knowledge of the social and health issues that are impacted by housing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skills and Abilities</b></p>	<p><b>Essential (Level 1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ability to work as part of a team</li> <li>▪ Ability to operate on own initiative with minimal supervision</li> <li>▪ Excellent written and oral communication skills, with the ability to communicate to a range of customers, colleagues, Members and stakeholders at a range of levels and through a range of mediums.</li> <li>▪ Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to operate and build excellent working relationships at all levels and constructive partnerships and networks with agencies and stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ High level of attention to detail and accuracy.</li> <li>▪ Competent user of IT, particularly Microsoft Office.</li> <li>▪ Proactive and committed to continued service and personal development.</li> <li>▪ Ability to adapt and proactively organise and prioritise work effectively in order to meet deadlines and maintain high standards at all times.</li> <li>▪ Ability to demonstrate a professional and customer orientated approach</li> <li>▪ The ability to make sound, evidence based decisions</li> <li>▪ The ability to attend some evening meetings and weekend activities.</li> <li>▪ The ability to travel around the district in an efficient and effective manner</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Desirable (Level 2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ability to deal with complex cases independently.</li><li>▪ Ability to carry out and conduct thorough and comprehensive investigations into homelessness on a consistent basis.</li><li>▪ Ability to produce complex decision letters to a high standard.</li></ul>
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