
Post Title: Housing Needs Officer

Grade: Scale 5

Responsible to: Housing Needs Manager

Responsible for: None

Main contact associated with principal duties:

- Staff within Housing, Health & Engineering Services
 - Elected members & MP enquiries
 - Solicitors' enquiries regarding homeless applicants.
 - Registered providers
 - Support Agencies
 - Members of the public
 - LCC children's social care and adult care services
 - Health services
 - Other local authorities
 - Probation and prison services
 - Private Landlords
 - Providers of temporary accommodation
 - Other external statutory, voluntary & community-based organisations
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Job Purpose:

- To manage a caseload and undertake Housing Options / Homelessness interviews as required.
 - To provide advice and assistance to homeless applicants.
 - To implement the Council's duty towards individuals under homelessness legislation.
 - To contribute to the formulation of the Council's homelessness strategy and policies in relation to the housing needs section.
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Control of Resources: None

Main duties and responsibilities:

1. To undertake Housing Options interviews with the client, and to provide a range of housing advice and homelessness prevention services to resolve the clients housing issues including, but not exclusively, the following:
 - Opportunities for access to affordable housing including private sector options.
 - Usage of the Council's private sector bond schemes in accordance with agreed policies and procedures
 - Local authority housing register admission criteria and allocation policy.
 - Housing and tenure status and security and rights of occupation
 - Harassment and illegal occupation

- Consequences of relationship breakdown and domestic violence
 - Income maximisation and welfare benefits
 - Rent and mortgage arrears and other debt issues
 - County Court possession proceedings
 - Housing condition and disrepair.
 - Liaison with mediation services
 - Where necessary and appropriate direct applicants to other agencies offering housing / specialist advice.
2. To undertake homelessness interviews and related enquiries to determine eligibility, priority need, and intentionality of homelessness applications in accordance with the provisions of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as amended, associated codes of guidance, relevant case law and the Council's agreed policies and procedures.
 3. To progress homeless applicants into Prevention, Relief and Main Duty categories where assessment has been satisfied in accordance with the Homelessness Legislation.
 4. To Keep PHP (personal housing plans under review throughout the homelessness assessment process.
 5. To have specialist knowledge of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII and to formulate section 184 letters in accordance with the Legislation for issue to applicants approaching the Service for assistance.
 6. To make referrals to other Local Authorities as required under the Legislation and process incoming referrals under s198 where conditions are met.
 7. To accept responsibility for reaching a decision in respect of each homelessness application received and for issuing a decision letter to the applicant within prescribed target times.
 8. To liaise with housing staff and other agencies in the provision of accommodation solutions.
 9. To liaise with all temporary accommodation providers to monitor and facilitate appropriate accommodation solutions for homeless households.
 10. Ensure that homeless households maximise their entitlement to Housing Benefit / Universal Credit housing payment and liaise with the Housing Needs Manager and others to ensure solutions for those with a shortfall.
 11. To develop a package of appropriate support to people who the council has a Section 193 duty towards.
 12. To attend child protection conferences, multi-disciplinary case meetings under the Mental Health Act and other multi agency meetings where housing need is a critical factor to meet the statutory requirements of other agencies.
 13. To make safeguarding referrals where there are significant issues that require the intervention of the safeguarding team.
 14. To provide advice and assistance to LCC Children's Social Case in following joint protocols for 16/17 year olds and Care leavers.
 15. To monitor and administer the Council's private sector bond schemes.
 16. To liaise with private landlords, tenants, housing staff and other agencies to ensure that the private sector is a viable housing solution.
 17. To work with the prison/probation services and health colleagues to develop appropriate housing related support packages for people due for release/discharge from institutions.
- To handle assessments sensitively under pressure from a range of homeless applicants in a situation of crisis.

- 18 To select households from the local authority allocations scheme to facilitate nomination requests from housing associations.
- 19 To monitor unsuccessful housing association nominations to ensure that further housing options advice is provided where and when appropriate. To make bids on behalf of applicants in order to efficiently house applicants under the Council's Homelessness Duties.
- 20 To liaise in general with housing associations on the provision of accommodation solutions for those in housing need.
- 21 To signpost applicants for money / budget advice to relevant services such as CAB and other free money advice services.
- 22 To meet the emergency needs of persons in the event of fire, flood or other crisis situations.
- 23 To maintain supporting administrative systems and to record all relevant information in order to provide accurate records for internal performance management and help complete appropriate Government statistical returns.
- 24 To administer the Council's involvement in mutual exchange schemes and ensure that records and statistics are adequately maintained.
- 25 To be aware of the possible dangers faced while working alone with vulnerable people and follow the policies and procedures of the Council and the actions required from risk assessments.
- 26 To contribute to any review of the Housing Needs function and to contribute to the development and implementation of associated improvement plans.
- 27 To be aware of your responsibilities under equalities legislation together with the Council's Equalities Objectives action plans.
- 28 To take part in training and development courses and to keep up to date with changing Legislative and Policy agendas.
- 29 To undertake other duties as may be required commensurate with the grading of the post.

Selection Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Assessment Method
Qualifications		
1. An appropriate qualification equal to NVQ level III in a relevant subject e.g. Housing, Social Work, or other related areas.	Essential	Application Certification
Knowledge, skills, abilities and experience		
2. Extensive experience of working with assessment and advice-giving procedures in a welfare setting within local government or other appropriate agency.	Essential	Application Interview
3. Excellent communication skills for communicating verbally with colleagues and customers and in writing for drafting letters and emails.	Essential	Application Interview
4. The ability to work on own initiative, with self-motivation under minimum supervision to agreed timescales.	Essential	Application Interview
5. The ability to contribute towards the evaluation of / and development of policy & procedures.	Essential	Application Interview
6. Good working knowledge of MS office-based IT systems.	Essential	Application Interview
7. Knowledge and understanding of the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010.	Essential	Application Interview
8. A good working knowledge of homelessness legislation i.e. Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as amended and associated Code of Guidance.	Desirable	Application Interview
9. Experience of using a database for record keeping of client's data.	Desirable	Application Interview
Special Requirements		
10. A current driving licence, and willing to use own vehicle for work or other means of attending meetings / appointments away from the office.	Essential	Application
11. Willingness to work beyond 5pm occasionally Monday to Friday if service needs exist.	Essential	Application
This post is subject to pre-employment and probationary drug and alcohol testing. It will then be part of the ongoing random testing regime for safety critical posts.		