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Job Profile

JOB TITLE: Housing Advice & Homeless Prevention Officer

GRADE: SO2

POST NO:

JOB TIER: 5

DSB CHECK: Enhanced

GROUP: Place

SERVICE: Housing Needs

REPORTING STRUCTURE Homeless Prevention & Housing Allocations
Manager

Direct Reports: None

Indirect Reports: None

ROLE PURPOSE

The post-holder will be responsible for proactively delivering housing options advice, including security of tenure, low cost home ownership, preventing homelessness, investigating householder circumstances and undertaking statutory assessments in order to determine the best options and resources available on a case by case basis. This will involve carrying and managing a case load across housing options, move-on and homeless prevention, to work with individuals supporting and directing clients to access a broad range of housing options and where appropriate making relevant onward referrals and signpost to other services. The post holder will ensure statutory requirements are met and local team targets are delivered through case work.



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A. Job Description

1. People Management

- No direct supervisory responsibility however may be requirement to assist in induction and training of peers and new employees.

2. Customer Management

- To actively support the management of the service delivering a professional, responsive and individualised service to Hillingdon residents requiring housing advice and to explore and sign-post to housing options.
- To demonstrate understanding of the Council's *Customer Care Standards* and ensure that these standards are met in order to deliver the Council vision of 'putting our residents first'.
- To provide holistic, informed and accurate housing advice which is "right first time", to all approaches to the service.
- To support, coach and empower residents to independently assess and manage their own housing situation and make informed choices.

3. Operational Service Delivery

- To ensure that potentially homeless clients are given advice and assistance including those in housing need to whom the Council has no legal obligation to provide emergency accommodation to claim housing and other welfare benefits available to them with the aim of preventing or delaying homelessness, including the use of discretionary hardship payments (DHP).
- To assess and determine applications from homeless households within the terms of part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
- To discharge the Council's statutory duty in investigating, assessing and determining applications from homeless households within the terms of part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
- To actively manage case work in accordance to expected standards of timeliness and quality and to adhere to agreed procedures at all times, including maintaining a high standard of accurate written records and reports. ~~effective record-keeping.~~
- Be knowledgeable and up to date with housing legislation, policy, procedures, case law and Codes of Guidance to ensure statutory requirements are consistently met.



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- To contribute to communicating clearly and effectively with staff, customers and their representatives, Elected Members, colleagues and other third parties around all aspects of the service delivery and linkages with other areas, promoting a widespread understanding of the service and its capacity in order to manage stakeholders expectations and agree realistic outcomes and goals.
- Represent the service at meetings, case conferences and on committees/bodies as required.
- To contribute to preparing and implementing the housing strategy, homelessness strategy, rough sleepers' strategy, allocations policy as it relates to housing need, and to undertake projects related to the development of the service area.
- To actively detect and prevent fraudulent applications for housing assistance and refer any possible cases to our Counter Fraud Team.
- To undertake investigations into complaints and Members Enquiries and ombudsman enquiries as required. Ensure corporate standards are met consistently, including complaints and Members Enquiries.

Housing Options and Move-On

- Be able to provide advice on a range of housing options, including low cost home ownership which promotes self-service, independence and prevents homelessness.
- To manage case work using expertise, knowledge of legislation and well established networks and partnerships to move clients on from temporary accommodation into longer term suitable and sustainable accommodation which effectively fulfils the Councils statutory duties.
- To ensure that suitable housing solutions are delivered to residents consistently. This includes reducing the use of temporary accommodation and developing creative solutions to achieve this, including consistent use of the Social Housing Allocations Policy and the Private Rented Sector (PRS).
- To develop and maintain effective relationships with private sector landlords, local managing and lettings agents and owners of empty properties in order to secure use of privately rented properties for households in housing need in the Borough.
- To engage with the Housing Register and Allocations Team, Adult Social Care and Children's Services to deliver a seamless service.
- Identify and manage safeguarding concerns and risk, introducing risk aversion plans and make safeguarding for vulnerable individuals, including CAF referrals for families with/and children and young people. Taking the lead professional role where necessary and attend joint meetings, case conferences etc
- Manage the risk and respond sensitively to adults, children and young people and fleeing abuse or violence, keeping them away from further harm, by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and to provide the best possible solutions.



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Homeless Prevention

- To be able to provide expert advice on security of tenure, giving detailed advice and be able to support tenants where their tenancy may be at risk.
- To be proactively managing complex case work and contributing to case reviews where residents are at risk of homelessness to effectively fulfil the Council's statutory duties and resolve their homelessness and intervene immediately with cases to prevent crisis homelessness.
- Be responsible for building effective working relationships with Adult Social Care, Children's Services, other Council services and external housing and support partners to deliver a seamless service, where appropriate. Have an understanding of the various social care legislative requirements as they affect housing.
- To take appropriate action to investigate and discharge the Council's homeless duty where appropriate for cases where there is concern that temporary accommodation has been abandoned, sub-let or misused.

4. Service Planning & Development

- Contribute to the annual Team Plan and delivery of team targets.
- Contribute to the development and review of procedure manuals providing guidance on the functions of the team.

5. Financial & Resource Management

- To actively support and contribute to the effective management of the allocated department / team budget.
- To ensure all purchasing and procurement is conducted in line with the corporate guidelines with appropriate use of the Council's financial systems.
- To demonstrate cost-consciousness and identify any cost-effective changes to own way of working.

6. Continuous Improvement

- Contribute to the delivery of cross-cutting service improvement initiatives and projects.
- To identify and suggest any improvements to current ways of working in order to deliver a more efficient and effective service for residents.



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- To undertake appropriate professional training to maintain professional competence and continual personal development, as required.
- Maintain an awareness of the Council's legal duties and policy objectives in respect of Equal Opportunities and Customer Care and ensure that they are incorporated into policy and practice.

7. Contacts

- Any role specific responsibilities.
- Council wide where appropriate in particular to engage with Adult Social Care and Children's Services to deliver a seamless service where appropriate.
- External: Including but not limited to; DWP; Rent Officers; Solicitors; Estate Agents; Accommodation Agencies; Housing Associations & RSLs; Probation Services; Voluntary Agencies; Hillingdon Law Centre; CABs; Health Care providers & CCG.

8. Additional Responsibilities

- To carry out all duties with full regard to responsibilities under health and safety legislation and the Council's health and safety policies
- To provide support and advice to staff in other sections.
- Complete other reasonable tasks in order to fulfil role purpose or as instructed by management.

9. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Delivery of agreed Team Plans.
- Reducing numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation.
- Procurement of private rented accommodation.
- Supporting residents into alternative accommodation provision.
- Prevention case decisions completed within 56 days
- Relief case decisions completed within 56 days.
- Reviews undertaken within 56 days.
- Delivery against any agreed Service Levels.



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- Delivery of agreed PADA objectives

10. Professional characteristics of people working within the Housing Directorate.

The housing directorate expects that all officers with the service seek to achieve, maintain and exceed the following individual personal characteristics as set out in the Chartered Institute of Housing Professional Standards

- **Integrity:** A housing professional has a clear understanding of their values and acts in accordance with them – they will do the right thing, for the right reasons, based on the best evidence and without partiality.
- **Inclusive:** A housing professional acts transparently and fairly; builds good relationships; and works collaboratively with partners, customers and communities to achieve better outcomes.
- **Ethical:** A housing professional acts fairly and makes choices and decisions by applying principles and values consistently. They understand the impact that poor decisions can have both on people's lives and the reputation of their organisation and they challenge unethical practice in a fair and considered way.
- **Knowledgeable:** A housing professional has relevant and up-to-date practical and specialist knowledge as required by their job role, understands the bigger picture and has a passion for continuous learning.
- **Skilled:** A housing professional equips themselves with the relevant skills to deliver effective services to tenants, customers, colleagues and partners.
- **Advocate:** A housing professional acts as an ambassador for the wider housing sector and an advocate for the housing profession.
- **Leadership:** Housing professionals at all levels should demonstrate leadership, be forward-thinking and create opportunities. They find solutions to improve outcomes for their organisation, tenants and communities and demonstrate their ability to adapt to the latest ideas, situations and change.



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B. Person Specification

Housing Advice & Homeless Prevention Officer

This person specification will be used for recruitment to the **Housing Advice & Homeless Prevention Officer** vacancy in LBH. It will form the basis of the application form, and candidates will be also assessed against aspects of this person specification at interview.

1. QUALIFICATIONS	ESSENTIAL ✓	DESIRABLE ✓
Hold an appropriate qualification in a relevant field: NVQ, Diploma, relevant degree or relevant experience.	✓	
A good standard of education with English & Maths GCSE grade A-C or equivalent	✓	
2. STATUTORY or ROLE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	ESSENTIAL ✓	DESIRABLE ✓
Ability and willingness to participate in a rota system for the Emergency Out of Hours Housing Service, offering housing advice and sourcing emergency accommodation, if required.		✓
Ability to work flexibly to meet the needs of the service	✓	
Able to visit clients Borough-wide and outside the Borough, if required.		✓
3. EXPERIENCE	ESSENTIAL ✓	DESIRABLE ✓
Experience of working in a front facing team interviewing and assessing clients with a need for assistance.	✓	
Experience of case work and the application of case work management systems.	✓	
Experience of effective multi-disciplinary working.	✓	
Experience of working on defined operational projects, working to tight deadlines and objectives with minimum supervision.	✓	
4. KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	ESSENTIAL ✓	DESIRABLE ✓
Have an excellent working knowledge (or demonstrate the ability to have or acquire) of all elements of housing needs: housing advice, homelessness prevention, property allocation and choice based lettings.	✓	
To have a comprehensive and cross cutting understanding of relevant policy and strategy areas, including, but not exclusively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hillingdon's housing strategy, homelessness strategy and related sub strategies. b. Hillingdon's Health and wellbeing strategy. c. Hillingdon's social housing allocations policy. 	✓	



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d. The Housing Act 1996 part VI & VII and all associated homeless legislation e. Codes of guidance from central government. f. DWP guidance and benefits regulations. g. Domestic abuse strategy. h. Safeguarding children and adults' guidance.		
To be a confident, engaging communicator, able to positively handle contact with clients from a range of backgrounds and with complex needs	✓	
Have the ability to build and maintain a good understanding of wider council and department objectives, services and initiatives and an understanding of how these interface with delivery of housing needs services.	✓	
The ability to handle conflict, or potential conflict situations with clients who may be distressed, dissatisfied or potentially aggressive/violent, and to do so within the Councils policy/procedure on carrying out such interviews.	✓	
Strong negotiation and influencing skills with the ability to appropriately challenge.	✓	
The ability to build and maintain a thorough working knowledge in using data and case management systems to ensure data quality and effective sharing of work.	✓	
Excellent ICT skills and knowledge of service specific software to maximise effectiveness. Proven ability to work with several software applications in conjunction, and proficiency in office ICT tools and database use.	✓	
Ability to handle and respond to customer complaints clearly and comprehensively in keeping with the council's service standards.	✓	
5. COMPETENCIES	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
"Can do" positive attitude Demonstrates a commitment to changing work practices and processes, and a willingness to try new ways of working or thinking.	✓	
Takes responsibility and delivers results Adapts to changing demands to ensure that objectives are met, overcoming problems and making well considered decisions.	✓	
Team working Acts as a role model to others in the team, sharing knowledge and experience when necessary, whilst respecting and valuing the contribution other team members' experiences can bring.	✓	
Communication Demonstrates well developed written and verbal communication skills; and the confidence to present reports and verbal accounts credibly to a variety of different audiences.	✓	
Customer Care	✓	



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Develops contacts and relationships with customer/ client groups, regularly reviewing service delivery and taking responsibility to ensure quality service provision.		
Takes ownership of personal development Takes action to develop own and others' capability and knowledge by promoting and supporting developmental opportunities to improve performance.	✓	