

Hyndburn Borough Council

Job Description

Job Title:	Housing Advice & Homelessness Officer
Post No.:	HS018
Service:	Regeneration & Housing Services
Agreement:	NJC For Local Government Services
Range:	Scale 8 SCP27-29
Other:	Casual Car User Allowance Basic DBS

Organisational Relationships:

Reports to: Housing Advice & Homelessness Manager

Supervises: None

Coordinates with: Colleagues in Regeneration and Housing Services, other council departments, statutory authorities, VCFSE organisations, registered providers, supported housing providers, temporary accommodation providers and private landlords.

Customer Focus: As a public servant any duties of the post which require contact with or provision of service to the Authority's customers shall be carried out in a courteous, helpful and professional manner in line with the Customer Care Policy adopted by the Council.

Primary Objective(s):

- To contribute to providing a comprehensive housing advice service, with an emphasis on homeless prevention in accordance with current government directives;
- To carry out the Council's statutory homelessness responsibilities under the 1996 Housing Act, Part VII as amended by the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act and other statutory instruments

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

1. To provide housing advice and assistance in dealing with housing enquiries, especially in relation to preventing homelessness. This involves ascertaining what specific housing issues a client may present with, assessing what legal duties may be owed under homelessness legislation and considering options to prevent or relieve the persons homelessness. This will include the need to show strong inter-personal skills in dealing

with people who may themselves be dealing with very complex and potentially harrowing issues in their life. This will include.

- a. Having the ability to listen to complex information and deciding what is relevant in trying to resolve the clients housing situation.
 - b. Using that information to help formulate a way forward which considers the client's needs, concerns and wishes.
 - c. Taking an empathetic approach towards what could be very difficult conversations with the client, whilst always maintaining a professional relationship.
2. To manage a caseload of housing advice and homelessness cases. To work on own initiative, independently and intensively on an ongoing basis with all clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This will involve working with clients who present with multiple complex and challenging issues and are on occasion considered to be within a very high-risk client group. This includes but not limited to clients with particularly concerning mental health issues which may include having suicidal ideation, victims of domestic abuse, people with problematic drug and alcohol misuse issues, serious offending history, having left the care system and also people who have recently been successful in applying for asylum or in process of leaving refugee schemes.
 3. To make prompt and thorough enquiries under homelessness legislation into the circumstances of people who approach the council for assistance. This could include making decisions related to whether a person is eligible for assistance, homeless, in priority need, intentionality and whether s/he has a local connection to the borough. To also assess the persons homelessness situation in relation to whether the person is owed duties under the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act such as being owed a 'Prevention' or 'Relief duty'. Where a 'Prevention' or 'Relief' duty is owed, to develop and agree a Personal Housing Plan with clients and keep the document under review. To make enquiries under homelessness legislation, reach decisions and issue statutory homelessness decisions in line with relevant homelessness legislation.
 4. To consider all options for preventing and relieving homelessness. This may include but not limited to:
 - a. Understanding Landlord and Tenancy law including under the Renters Rights Act in order to advise clients of their legal rights to remain with their tenancies / licenses
 - b. Liaising with landlords to try and avert a client's homelessness
 - c. Liaising with parents / family to try and avert homelessness for young people
 - d. Liaising with Housing Benefit / Universal Credit to help ensure housing payments are made to pay rent and avoid homelessness.
 - e. Assisting clients to apply to B-with-us choice-based letting scheme and ensuring the correct banding is given
 - f. Supporting clients to access supported housing options or private rented property where available
 - g. Making recommendations to the Housing Advice & Homelessness Manager with regards offering clients deposits / rent in advance and other financial help to try and prevent / relieve their homelessness under a 'spend to save' basis.
 - h. To have a good understanding of schemes which may help assist clients to prevent / relieve homelessness including accessing Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Households Support Fund (HSF) or help through the council's housing renewal grant scheme including Disabled Facilities Grants

5. To assess whether a client is owed a temporary accommodation duty and where this is the case, to liaise with temporary accommodation providers in terms of accessing placements, negotiating with providers regarding placement of clients with significant complex needs or who present as high risk to themselves or others.
6. To give advice and appropriate assistance in accordance with their individually assessed needs to people who are not entitled to a full housing duty. This includes people found not to be ineligible eg where they may be subject to immigration control and / or no recourse to public funds, those found to be not homeless, not in priority need, intentionally homeless and those who could be referred to other council's for assistance due to not having a local connection to Hyndburn.
7. To maintain an accurate and up-to-date knowledge of all housing related and homelessness legislation and best practice guidance to ensure that the advice and assistance given and systems and procedures adopted, reflect current legislation and appropriate guidelines.
8. To maintain professional working relationships with public, private and VCFSE agencies; this may include representing the Council at case conferences with other agencies in the public, private and VCFSE sectors as appropriate.
9. To ensure that all records and statistics are maintained accurately within the service database and to assist in the collation and maintenance of statistical information.
10. To actively contribute to the development and implementation of the Hyndburn Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
11. Be self-aware and constantly risk assess and manage situations that either pose or can increase risks or threats of harm to officers. Report violent incidents and near misses that occur via the council system. Manage and report risks of physical and emotional harm.
12. Identifying clients at risk and following the correct procedures to report welfare and safeguarding issues to the appropriate services.
13. Undertake duties as required by line manager or the Head of Service.
14. Assess own performance against service/business/work plans and targets
15. To deal with colleagues openly and fairly at all times and support mutual respect within teams.
16. To contribute to the continuous improvement of the service.
17. To undertake training as required.
18. To assist with the compilation of customer feedback information.
19. To operate in accordance with Council priorities and compliance relating to Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Customer Care.

In order to ensure that job descriptions are kept up to date, all employees are given the opportunity to regularly review their roles through the Authority's Performance & Development Reviews (PDR). Staff are therefore required to take a reasonable and flexible approach to changes arising from working practices or changing workloads.

Equality Act 2010 - *Where appropriate the duties may be reviewed where an applicant is a disabled person, or an existing employee becomes unable to carry out the full range of duties due to a disability*

Hyndburn Borough Council is committed to encouraging and supporting employees to achieve a Level 2 qualification in English and Maths.

Person Specification

Job Title: Housing Advice & Homelessness Officer			
Criteria are measured using 4 different sources: Application Form (A), Interview (I), Test (T), References (R)			
Job Criteria (Based on Job Description)	Essential	Desirable	Measured by
Qualifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 GCSEs or equivalent including Maths and English • Relevant Housing Qualification 	✓	✓	A/P A
Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years' experience of offering housing advice or similar, to the public, including the achievement of appropriate solutions to housing needs problems including the prevention of homelessness • Experience of working with statutory and voluntary agencies in relation to dealing with housing needs issues or in a related subject area. • Experience of carrying out assessments and decision making under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII as amended by the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act and other legislation. • Strong inter-personal skills when dealing with clients including the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Listen to complex information and deciding what is relevant in trying to resolve the clients housing situation. ○ Using that information to help formulate a way forward which considers the client's needs, concerns and wishes. ○ Taking an empathetic approach towards what could be very difficult conversations with the client, whilst always maintaining a professional relationship. • Knowledge of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Renters Rights Act and other legislation related to the prevention and relief of homelessness • Experience of managing own case work or equivalent such as working unsupervised in dealing with enquiries from the public. 	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	 ✓	A/I/T A/I A/I/T A/I/T A/I A/I
Knowledge/Skills/Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to work as part of a team but also to use your own initiative to work effectively without supervision • IT literate to process own letters in Microsoft Word and have experience of utilisation of a database 	✓ ✓		A/I A/I

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to consider complex housing needs cases and consider creative ways to resolve the clients particular housing issue 	✓		A/I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the legislation governing homelessness and allocations together with current Government policy on homelessness prevention 		✓	A/I
Additional Requirements:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and Reliable Service, (the Council does not wish to employ individuals who have a poor history of attendance at work, where there is no underlying medical reason for the absence). 	✓		R
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A commitment to customer care and equal opportunities and an understanding of how to put these into practice. 	✓		A/I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the principles of local democracy. 	✓		A/I
Other:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possession of a full current driving licence and motor vehicle 	✓		I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the Council's role in meeting housing need 		✓	I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display tact and diplomacy and an ability to deal with confidential matters. 	✓		I

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