**Job Description**

**JOB TITLE :** Housing Casework Assistant

**GRADE :** 5

**POST NO :** 3427

**SERVICE :** Customer Access

**UNIT :** Housing Needs

**REPORTS TO :** Housing Casework Team Leader

**RESPONSIBILE FOR :** None

**LIAISON WITH :** Officers in Strategic Housing Services and throughout the council as necessary; other statutory and voluntary providers of support, advice or accommodation; private sector organisations.

**PURPOSE OF JOB**

To specifically focus on assisting people (customers) threatened with homelessness to resolve their housing difficulties and retain their existing homes (where safe to do so) through the provision of high quality advocacy, advice and activities in order to prevent and relieve homelessness wherever possible.

To accurately assess and discharge the council’s duty to homeless customers.

To actively contribute to the achievement of the council’s strategic objectives and government targets and implement the council’s Homelessness Strategy.

**MAIN ACTIVITIES**

**Homelessness Prevention activities**

**(Subject to guidance from Team Leader and sign-off for decisions where appropriate)**

1. To act as first point of contact for people in housing need approaching Customer Services at the Civic Centre and to provide initial triage and signposting to relevant external and internal services including prioritisation for interviews and appointments with housing caseworkers where appropriate.
2. To administer and pro-actively work with a caseload of up to 20 customers / households focusing on preventing and / or relieving homelessness.
3. To make pro-active interventions with both presenting and prospective customers in order to provide comprehensive person-centred advice and advocacy on housing rights, income maximisation, financial management, relevant support services and to inform, support and signpost customers to specialist advice agencies where applicable and to follow up on referrals and outcomes accordingly.
4. Ensure that good quality housing advice is given to customers to prevent homelessness and to both encourage and enable applicants to sustainably resolve their own housing difficulties through a jointly agreed regularly reviewed housing action plan.
5. To pro-actively take actions to prevent the loss of accommodation either as a short or long term solution using all means available. This also includes immediate interventions to prevent crisis homelessness including where possible and reasonable to help customers retain or re-access their current accommodation (without the need to refer under a statutory homelessness duty).
6. To regularly liaise with the customer and other agencies in order to prevent homelessness e.g. families and friends, landlords, supported housing, solicitors, courts, social services and other agencies.
7. To liaise with private and social landlords in order to maximise homelessness preventions by both mediating and negotiating on behalf of customers in receipt of a notice to quit.
8. To take pro-active interventions with customers wherever necessary (e.g. in their own home, hospital, prison) in order to confirm the details of their situation and to prevent the loss of their accommodation wherever possible and to determine the level of intervention required and recommend appropriate courses of action.
9. To provide comprehensive advice about housing options within the private rented and social housing sectors including affordability testing, housing-related support opportunities, and tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities including (not exclusively) landlord and tenant law, harassment, eviction proceedings, rights to repairs, additional security measures and discretionary finance options etc.

**Ongoing Assistance**

1. To identify individual customer support needs and make referrals for support and / or accommodation where suitable to ensure longer-term sustainment of accommodation and minimise the risk of repeat homelessness. Referrals may include for example to debt support, floating support, substance misuse, mental health, family support and safeguarding.
2. To attend key meetings and hearings e.g. multi-agency meetings, court dates, case reviews etc as required.
3. To implement and administer discretionary fund payments where necessary for rent deposits, removal costs and storage of personal effects in partnership with other appropriate sources of eligible funding (e.g. DHP, DHG, charitable benevolent funds) and in accordance with the council’s financial regulations and policies.
4. To actively pursue options for alternative housing by undertaking a case management approach focused on regular customer engagement until suitable accommodation is offered. This includes appropriate move-on from emergency / temporary accommodation.
5. To help to access the private rented sector, referral to supported or specialist accommodation, assistance accessing the social housing register including assessing relevant banding and use of discretionary funding to access housing.
6. To undertake investigations required to obtain information sufficient to determine the council’s obligations under the homeless legislation.
7. (Where homelessness cannot be prevented) To apply the homelessness legislation accurately and consistently in order to make recommendations as to whether the test for a homeless application has been met in terms of Eligibility, Homelessness, Priority Need, Intentionality, Local Connection and suitability of offer ensuring adherence to the measure of “reason to believe” and assessment of relative vulnerability.

**General**

1. To maintain complete, timely and accurate electronic records of all actions and correspondence in relation to casework and to ensure customer records are clear and comprehensive and that outcomes are clearly identified and recorded for monitoring and reporting purposes.
2. To participate in duty rota and manage a caseload of households threatened with homelessness. This includes activities at the Civic Centre as well as in external venues.
3. To maintain a good awareness and active and creative application of relevant housing and homelessness legislation including case law and to carry out the council’s duties under the current legislation relating to homelessness (at this time primarily the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
4. To be responsible for checking and confirming details of invoices for services procured on behalf of customers.
5. To provide a comprehensive and responsive telephone enquiry service.
6. To assist with the active referral, promotion and recruitment of suitable landlords for the purpose of growing referral options for customers.
7. To contribute to the achievement of government targets, national and local performance indicators, including the objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Strategies and their constituent Action Plans.
8. To contribute to the promotion, development and improvement of a pro-active and preventative service. To include day to day liaison, assistance with agency training, presentations and production of literature and project work as required.
9. To provide the service in line with the council’s customer care commitments providing excellent customer care service to all applicants through all mediums of contact.
10. To meet all statutory, corporate and local deadlines and targets as required.
11. To undertake appropriate training as required, engage and participate in team meetings, briefing, supervision, appraisal and personal development agendas and to lead, as directed, in the development and dissemination of good practice in any chosen area of the service.
12. To assist with the induction of new employees in the team / department as directed.
13. Any other duties commensurate with the role.

**DATE LAST UPDATED:** April 2017

**Person Specification**

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**GRADE :** 5 **POST NO :** 3427

**SERVICE :** Customer Access

**UNIT :** Housing

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|  | **CRITERIA** | **ESSENTIAL/ DESIRABLE (E/D)** | **METHOD OF ASSESSMENT** |
| **QUALIFICATIONS &**  **KNOWLEDGE** | A good standard of general education (GCSE) including a demonstrably good level of numeracy and literacy.  Educated to A level or above.  Certificate in Housing – Level 3 or above – or equivalent in Health / Social Care  An awareness of the homelessness legislation and the processes used to assess housing need  Awareness of the law relating to landlord and Tenant issues and general housing rights.  Awareness of the welfare benefits system.  A broad understanding of wider social issues beyond homelessness including the types of wider support needs they may face and the methods and pathways for assisting people. | E  D  D  E  D  D  E | A, C  A, C  A, C  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I |
| **EXPERIENCE &**  **SKILLS** | A year’s experience of working with vulnerable people in a customer service role.  Experienced in working with other statutory and voluntary agencies to source information or managing referrals.  Experience of using Microsoft windows packages and client information systems on a frequent basis.  General high standard of verbal and written communication, including the ability to create and write well structured letters.  The ability to analyse complex information and legislation and make recommendations for courses of action.  Able to manage a varied workload and to prioritise competing demands ensuring targets and deadlines are met.  To be tenacious and assertive when pursuing solutions to problems.  To work flexibly towards creating solutions in a person-centred way with individuals.  Effective negotiation skills sufficient to persuade clients and agencies to pursue unpopular courses of action.  Able to deal effectively and positively with challenging behaviour from clients.  Ability to maintain enthusiasm and creativity in a pressured environment.  The ability to work within a team and independently on one’s own initiative. | E  D  E  E  E  D  D  D  D  D  E  E | A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I |
| **SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS & ATTITUDE** | Committed to a high standard of customer care.  Non-judgmental, diplomatic and understanding.  An understanding of the commitment to the principles of Equality and Diversity.  A commitment to good self-management, including positive health promotion, and record of attendance.  A willingness to embrace new methods and working practices.  An ability to empathise with customers but remain objective. | E  E  E  E  D  E | A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I  A, I |
| **OTHER** |  |  |  |

**COMPLETED BY:** Housing Solutions Lead

**DATE:** 8 May 2017

**CATEGORY:** A – Application, C - Certificates, T – Testing, I – Interview, R - Reference