**Job Description**

**JOB TITLE :** Housing Caseworker

**GRADE :** 8

**POST NO :** 0299

**SERVICE :** Customer Access

**UNIT :** Housing Needs

**REPORTS TO :** Housing Casework Team Leader

**RESPONSIBLE 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**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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).
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 and Determination**

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 accurately and fully complete all 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 determine whether the test for a homeless application has been met in terms of Eligibility, Homelessness and Priority Need ensuring adherence to the measure of “reason to believe” and assessment of relative vulnerability.
8. To assess and make decisions on homelessness applications producing decision letters to clients in a timely manner and notifying clients of their rights of appeal.
9. To ensure that s.184 notifications are issued within the specified timescale.
10. To be involved in the preparation and presentation of homelessness reviews.
11. To pro-actively pursue temporary housing and the move-on to settled accommodation in order to fully discharge the council’s s.193 duty.

**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 hold a specialism in an area of work as agreed with the Housing Solutions Lead.
4. 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.
5. To ensure value for money and income maximisation for the council, for example, by securing the most cost effective accommodation, ensuring prompt completion of necessary housing benefit forms and by ensuring the customer is aware of their obligation to make prompt payments of accommodation costs and service charges.
6. To be responsible for checking and confirming details of invoices for services procured on behalf of customers.
7. To provide a comprehensive and responsive telephone enquiry service.
8. To assist with the active referral, promotion and recruitment of suitable landlords for the purpose of growing referral options for customers.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. To meet all statutory, corporate and local deadlines and targets as required.
13. 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.
14. To assist with the induction of new employees in the team / department as directed.
15. To carry out such other appropriate duties as may be required by the head of service commensurate with the grade of this post.

**DATE LAST UPDATED:** April 2017

**Person Specification**

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|  | **CRITERIA** | **ESSENTIAL/ DESIRABLE (E/D)** | **METHOD OF ASSESSMENT** |
| **QUALIFICATIONS &****KNOWLEDGE** | Educated to A-level or equivalent, or a demonstrably good level of numeracy and literacy gained through relevant experience.A relevant degree, formal housing qualification (level 3) or specialised training around the provision of services to homeless people An in-depth working knowledge of homeless legislation including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017,The Localism Act 2011, the Housing Act 1996 part VII (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.An awareness of part VI of the above Act.An in-depth knowledge of law relating to landlord and tenant issues and general housing rights. A current working knowledge of the welfare benefits system.Detailed knowledge of the support needs associated with homelessness and the role of wider agencies in the provision of care and support services.Detailed understanding safeguarding protocols as well as knowledge of equality and diversity considerations needed in the delivery of a public service. | EDEDDEE E | A, CA, CA, CA, I, TA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, I |
| **EXPERIENCE &****SKILLS** | A minimum of one year’s experience in a similar public facing role working with homelessness and vulnerable clients or a similar challenging client group.Experienced in liaising with other statutory and voluntary agencies.Experience of using Microsoft windows packages and client information systems on a frequent basis.The ability to communicate effectively with customers and with multiple agencies and professionals.General high standard of verbal and written communication, including the ability to create and write well structured letters and reports.The ability to analyse complex information and legislation.Decisive with the ability to make rational assessments and decisions in a pressurised environment.Able to manage a varied workload and to prioritise competing demands ensuring targets and deadlines are met.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 challenging environment.The ability to work within a team and independently on one’s own initiative. | EEDEEEEEDEEDE | A, I,A, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, I |
| **SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS & ATTITUDE** | Sufficiently mobility to carry out client visits at their homes, hospital etc.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. | EEEEEDE | A, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, IA, I |
| **OTHER** |  |  |  |

**COMPLETED BY:** Housing Solutions Lead

**DATE:** 8 May 2017

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