

Job Description



Service Area:	Community & Housing Services
Job Title/Grade:	Housing Options Prevention Officer (SO2)
Responsible to:	Housing Options Team Leader
Our Culture & Values:	All job roles at Rochford District Council require the post-holder to be flexible and proactive in their approach. Being customer focused and willing to maximise your potential at work are expected. We all work together to achieve the very best for our residents which sometimes means getting involved in projects and trying new tasks outside of your day to day job role. We love our staff to suggest new ideas and to have enthusiasm to try out new experiences.

Main Responsibilities

- Deliver a customer orientated service to prevent homelessness which provides a suitable solution regarding homelessness and all housing issues
- Assess the Council's duties to those who are at risk of homelessness and ensure that these are discharged
- Carry out the Council's statutory duties under homelessness legislation, housing law, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Housing Act Part V1 & V11, Localism Act 2011, Code of Guidance, case law and the Council's policies and procedures
- Ensure the length of stay in temporary accommodation/B&Bs is kept to a minimum
- Ensure that residents in housing need or facing homelessness are offered a range of suitable housing options, together with appropriate housing advice and support, to prevent their homelessness
- Actively seek to prevent homelessness and support the work of colleagues and others in identifying and providing housing solutions for those who contact the Council
- Liaise with families, private landlords, social care, letting agencies, mortgage lenders and others where necessary, making referrals to both internal and external services
- Ensure that applications for the housing register are processed in line with the housing allocation policy
- Take ownership of caseloads in ensuring that all housing options are explored in all cases to establish and maximise opportunities for the prevention of homelessness
- Undertake all prevention work and personal housing plans in line with the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Investigate applications for housing in line with current legislation, policies and procedures; undertaking home visits, surgeries and case conferences as necessary
- Undertake a proportion of complex cases as directed by the Housing Options Team Leader



Main Responsibilities

- Refer into local Domestic Abuse Services, as a core part of case management; attend MARAC meetings as appropriate
- Provide advice to those seeking accommodation on private sector housing options, including information on tenancy issues and welfare benefits
- Ensure households are appropriately assessed for temporary and permanent accommodation to ensure appropriate accommodation is sourced
- Ensure communication with partners is ongoing about case progress and a settled housing option is secured in an efficient and timely manner
- Work with the Housing Options Team Leader on projects or procedures as necessary
- Provide a single point of contact and assistance for private landlords and agents, offering advice on: tenancy agreements, tenant/ landlord disputes, notice to quits, possessions, housing benefit, rent deposits, with the purpose of seeking to sustain the accommodation wherever possible
- Work with landlords and agents to negotiate financial schemes including bonds and incentives
- Work with Revenue and Benefits as required to minimise benefit payment delays; work with other council services, external and voluntary agencies to ensure appropriate landlord and tenancy support is provided, as required
- Carry out routine, both planned and unplanned, checks on all temporary accommodation; including homes visits for the purposes of checking occupancy and use is in accordance with any licence or assured tenancy agreement
- Produce and monitor all move on plans for applicants in temporary accommodation; manage move on arrangements for all applicants in temporary accommodation
- Work with all private landlords and letting agents across the district to secure and increase the availability of private rental accommodation
- Manage own case loads, in taking the lead and overall responsibility for investigating and interviewing to ensure targets are met
- Ensure correct legal decisions are issued and achievement of individual and team performance objectives and service standards
- Prepare and present prevention outcomes to applicants, in writing and verbally, and be accountable to applicants and others when required to explain decisions
- Maintain accurate and up to date records and case files to support the prevention work and ensure these are updated upon each contact
- Ensure knowledge of relevant housing and homeless law, in particular: Housing Act Pts VI and VII, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, policies and local options are maintained. Update and amend work practices where needed; maintain a good understanding of the functions and duties of other key agencies and welfare rights



Main Responsibilities

- Provide support to the Housing Options Team Leader in developing and maintaining the Council's policy, procedures and strategic approaches, in order to continually develop the Housing Options service
- Monitor performance against relevant aims and targets, reporting to line manager risks and suggestions for improvements to the service
- Occasionally lead on assigned projects relating to the prevention of homelessness and housing options available to meet need
- Needs to be able to evidence excellent communication skills and ability to work in challenging situations. Able to influence and work co-operatively and sensitively with Members, colleagues, partners and other external organisations
- Promote the services offered by the Housing Options service and wider Directorate, including training and presentations
- Represent the Housing Options service and Directorate at internal and external county and regional meetings, on matters relating to the post
- Be on standby for the "out of office hours" call-out service

Corporate Responsibilities

- To observe all of the requirements of Safeguarding and to report any potential Safeguarding concerns in accordance with the Council's Safeguarding Policy.
- To comply with all appropriate legislation and Council policies including the Officers Code of Conduct, Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and the Council's Health and Safety Policy and procedures.
- To support the Council's Equalities & Diversity Policies.
- All staff may on occasions be required to support the Council to deal with emergency situations affecting the community we serve. In the event of such an emergency or, of a rehearsal for such an event, the Postholder may be required to attend at times and at locations outside of the norm for the post and to adopt the duties directed by the Officer in Charge for the duration of the emergency situation.
- To contribute to project work arising from the Business Plan and to undertake any other reasonable duties as may be required from time to time by the Line Manager/Leadership Team.



Review

The duties and responsibilities of this post may vary from time to time according to the changing requirements of the Council. The job description may be reviewed at the discretion of the relevant Assistant Director in the light of those changing requirements and in consultation with the postholder. In any event, the Head of Paid Service reserves the right to review and amend the job description.

Signed (Postholder):

Dated:



Personal Specification

Post	Housing Options Prevention Officer
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Essential Requirements

Qualifications

- Minimum of 4 GCSEs (or equivalent) grade C or above, including Maths and English

Knowledge and Skills

- Excellent knowledge of current housing and homelessness legislation, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 case law and guidance
- Good knowledge of housing allocation and registration processes
- Good knowledge of landlord and tenant legislation
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills to a wide range of audiences
- Excellent knowledge of local housing authority functions and the role of social landlords
- Good understanding of welfare and benefits
- Excellent attention to detail and effective organisational skills
- Financial and budgetary knowledge
- Good understanding of the roles and functions of partners such as landlords, social care and health
- Good working knowledge of Microsoft 'Office' software – Windows, Word, Excel and Outlook
- Understanding of the importance of equality and diversity and can apply this in the workplace

Experience

- Minimum of 1 year's experience in homelessness and/or housing advice casework
- Managing own workload
- Partnership working
- Providing high quality customer focussed service
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Undertaking and leading on task and finish projects
- Taking responsibility for personal development and learning

Ability

- Full Driving Licence and daily use of a car or the ability to travel throughout the District and beyond



Essential Requirements

- Able to work in multiple locations and work flexibly across the district
- Able to make independent and collaborative decisions to achieve results and outcomes against targets and under pressure
- Able to demonstrate the ability to respond effectively to crisis situations and conduct sensitive interviews assertively through effective verbal and written communication skills; working as part of a team and in partnership with key internal and external stakeholders
- Able to negotiate and advise effectively to present issues in a persuasive and balanced manner, influencing whilst empathising to resolve situations
- Able to demonstrate the ability to form collaborative partnerships with external/internal agencies to develop specialist areas in conjunction with existing case work
- Displays an awareness, understanding and commitment to the protection and safeguarding of children and young people and / or vulnerable adults
- Enthusiastic, motivates, positive and confident, able to lead by example
- Able to influence and work in a co-operative and sensitive manner with Members, colleagues and external agencies
- Ability to work in multiple locations and work flexibly across the district
- Able to prioritise work appropriately
- Able to multi-task, work to deadlines and work under pressure
- Flexible, pro-active and adaptable
- Effective team working. Sharing ownership, team goals and workload
- Commitment to maximising potential and continuous improvement of self and of service
- Able to contribute positive suggestions and willing to take forward
- Able to establish and maintain effective relationships with people at all level
- Able to demonstrate a commitment to customer service

Desirable Requirements

Qualifications

- Relevant professional qualification, e.g. CIH

Knowledge and Skills

- Good working knowledge of Academy, Comino and/ or Locata software
- Knowledge of the District



Desirable Requirements

Experience

- Performance management

Ability

- Able to attend meetings out of the office and sometimes during out of office hours