

Housing Options Officer

Department	Housing Services
Pay Grade	G5
Responsible to	Housing Options Team Leader

Role Purpose

Working within Horsham District Councils solution-focused housing service, being the main point of contact working with agencies and the Horsham rough sleeping community to undertake triaging, risk assessments and Personal Housing Plans of those seeking housing assistance, provide advice, options and housing solutions to homeless households and those in temporary accommodation with the aim of preventing or relieving their homelessness.

Role Specific Responsibilities / Accountabilities

- Work with clients, provide advice and investigate homelessness applications made under the terms of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2011 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017).
- Complete an assessment of the customers circumstances, in all cases, to determine the duty owed to the customer and inform them in writing of the Council's decision in accordance with the relevant legislation, seeking advice and guidance where needed from colleagues.
- Complete a Personal Housing Plan with each customer where appropriate, compiling a tailored set of actions both the customer and staff will compete in order to prevent or relieve the customer's homelessness and to interview customers as and when required.
- Ensure that all homelessness applications are rigorously investigated, careful consideration is always given to the possibility of collusion and fraud, and the Council only accepts an interim or rehousing duty for those applicants to whom it owes a duty.
- Ensure that an accurate, detailed record is kept of all interviews and the follow-up action taken (and that files are maintained to a high standard) in order to assist monitoring, decision-making and effective case management including the government's quarterly HCLIC return.
- Provide advice to homeless customers about the Council's Housing Register including advice to people who are neither eligible, do not qualify or who are disqualified to join the Housing Register.
- Analyse complex legal, medical and financial information, and research and interpret legislation and case law, to ensure the provision of a professional, high quality casework service.

- Make optimum use of the opportunities to prevent or relieve homelessness, including the use of the Homelessness Prevention Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments, Tenancy Deposit Loan and the supply of private rented accommodation.
- Work proactively with Social Services to ensure that the Council's response to intentionally homeless families, homeless 16 and 17-year-olds, and people with extra support needs to reflect good practice and is appropriate and properly coordinated.
- Identify suitable, affordable and available housing options for applicant in order to prevent or relieve their homelessness, taking into account the applicant's particular needs and making all reasonable efforts to engage their cooperation.
- Source and book emergency accommodation for customers that the Council has reason to believe a homeless duty is owed.
- Link the homeless applicant in with the available support whilst residing in temporary accommodation and ensuring appropriate information is shared with the Temporary Accommodation Officer.
- Refer homeless cases to other Local Authorities if and where appropriate in accordance with the housing legislation and Government related guidance.
- Produce comprehensive, high quality homelessness decisions, ensuring that they meet the requirements of the homelessness legislation and that, where the decision is unfavourable, it is robust and able to withstand challenge and scrutiny.
- Attend related internal and external meetings as a Council representative as and when required and provide feedback to the Housing Services Team as necessary.
- Identify suitable housing options in which the Council can lawfully discharge the main housing duty in accordance with Housing Act 1996.
- Liaise with other partner organisations and agencies, attending case conferences and care planning meetings as appropriate and if relevant to the applicants housing circumstances to ensure a joined up multiagency approach.
- Deal with emergency housing cases, which may arise, outside normal working hours.
- Carry out such other duties and cover that may reasonably be required by the Housing Options Team Leader, Housing Services Manager and Head of Service.

Knowledge, Skills and Qualifications

Minimum knowledge, skills and qualifications required to perform this role, relevant experience may be a substitute.

Essential Criteria

- Knowledge of homelessness legislation in particular Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017) and other relevant Acts
- A working knowledge of welfare benefits
- Ability to identify safeguarding concerns and complete referrals to the relevant organisation
- Knowledge of health and safety issues
- Work as part of a team and on own initiative
- Excellent written and oral communication skills including able to communicate with a range of people including members of the public, organisations, landlords and agencies and managing expectations
- IT user with excellent knowledge of Microsoft Word and Excel and be able to learn and use different packages and document management systems
- Time management and organisational skills
- Ability to participate in the Out of Hours homelessness service (approx. 1 week in 10) for which an additional payment is made
- A good understanding of homeless and housing issues
- Knowledge of completing assessments and personalised housing plans

Desirable Criteria

- Currently working in a homeless or housing environment
- Experience in completing s.189A assessments and developing personalised housing plans
- Experience in making and completing enquiries into an applicant's housing circumstances and issuing clear and robust s.184 decisions and duty notifications

Appendix

Generic Employee Responsibilities / Accountabilities

- Contribute to the delivery of the corporate objectives of the council developing good working relationships to promote the interests and reputation of the council building a positive image of the organisation.
- Participate in a culture of learning, collaborative working and excellence to build a culture of high performance, which inspires and supports the delivery of the council's Corporate Plan.

- Ensure that all duties are carried out in compliance with relevant statutory processes, corporate policies and the council's constitution.
- Proactively seek opportunities to continuously improve ways of working and council services by evaluating activities to enhance performance.
- Promote equality, diversity, access to services and tackling discrimination both within and outside the council to ensure there is a clear and consistent focus across the organisation and its partners in delivering an inclusive customer experience to all.
- Generally to comply with the Health and Safety policy and guidance ensuring the required mechanisms are used and to support the promotion of a culture of good health, safety and welfare, especially if nominated or appointed specifically to carry out simple checks at your place of work and log the activity.
- Follow the council's safeguarding procedures and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults across council services.
- Participate in risk management in service areas and follow required reporting procedures, as appropriate, to minimise risks to the council's operations.
- Follow and adhere to all Data Protection procedures and processes in accordance with relevant legislation ensuring all personal data of employees, members of the public and clients is used appropriately and retained within guidelines.
- The Returning Officer in this constituency is responsible for the election process. There is an expectation that council employees will, as reasonably requested to do so, assist the returning officer in election processes.
- In the event of a major incident or disaster you may be required to provide assistance in whatever capacity necessary to provide the necessary organisation, co-ordination and supply of resources to support the local key emergency services.

Generic Employee Behaviours

Our behaviours framework links to our values and identifies the core knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes we require from our people to deliver services.

Customer Focus

- Deliver a high standard of customer services
- Develop effective customer relationships
- Improve customer service to meet local needs and aspirations

Achieving Excellence

- Strive to be excellent
- Deliver increasing efficiency / effectiveness
- Use taxpayers' money wisely to deliver the highest quality services to the satisfaction of our customers

Our People

- Work collaboratively together as one team
- Invest in own performance and career and support colleagues
- Work creatively and responsibly