

Job Description and Person Specification

Job title:	Homelessness Prevention and Relief Officer
Directorate:	Place
Service:	Development & Regulation
Team:	Housing Operations
Post number:	05348, 05381
Salary grade:	H
Work location:	Market Street
Reports to:	Homelessness Prevention and Relief Team Leader
Supervises:	N/A

Job Purpose

1. To provide comprehensive housing advice and assistance to prevent and relieve homelessness for all households in housing need
2. To conduct a housing needs assessment to determine what statutory duty (if any) is owed.
3. To Issue relevant notifications and decisions under section 184 of the Housing Act as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act
4. To assist in assessing housing applications and deciding on nominations and allocations of social housing.
5. To work in partnership with outside agencies, RPs and other departments to resolve households housing problems.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

1. To provide comprehensive advice and assistance to all households in housing need to enable them to maintain their accommodation and/or prevent homelessness either in person, on the telephone or in writing.
2. To participate in the frontline duty service.
3. To conduct a housing needs assessment and prepare a personal housing plan (PHP) taking into account the needs assessment and to keep the PHP updated in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act.
4. To prevent homelessness and resolve threats of homelessness to eligible households by giving appropriate housing advice and providing hands on support.
5. To provide excellent standards of customer service at all times.
6. To maintain confidentiality, particularly when handling sensitive personal information regarding households' details, in accordance with the Council's confidentiality policy and protocol, acting at all times within the highest standard of professional practice.
7. To manage a caseload of housing applications, working with the households to resolve their housing issues in line with actions identified in the PHP, making regular contact and updating case notes and the housing database in a timely manner.
8. To attend multi-agency case conferences and meeting to represent the Housing Service. These may include Child Protection Conferences, Signs of Safety meetings, discharge

Main Duties and Responsibilities

planning meetings, the Young Persons Housing Panel, the Integrated offender Management meetings, the Mental Health Housing Panel, the Homelessness Forum, the Rough Sleepers Task and Targeting Group, MARAC, MAPPA and other meetings as and when necessary.

9. To conduct home visits and attend professionals meetings in order to verify information regarding a households' housing need.
10. To support households with defending possession proceedings in court and assist with preparation of their file for review by the judge.
11. To maintain a high level of professional knowledge of current legislation and best practice/case law.
12. To actively participate in reducing rough sleeping within the district by giving appropriate housing options advice, liaising with the Outreach Worker and other relevant services, such as Probation, Swanswell and the Community Mental Health Team.
13. To assess the needs of approaching rough sleepers or potential rough sleepers and to accommodate under the Council's Rough sleeping initiatives or No Second Night Out Scheme, as appropriate.
14. To calculate homelessness household's contribution towards their accommodation costs, take payments and issue receipts.
15. To proactively contribute to the Housing Service Plan and Housing and Homelessness Strategies, meeting the targets identified through a performance management system.
16. To undertake research leading to recommendations for changes to policy or operational procedures and generally participate in discussions on policy and procedural issues, proactively contributing to the continuous improvement of the Service.
17. To maintain database records using excel, word and other IT databases, including filing, general housekeeping and completing statutory returns.
18. To assist with the preparation of the Council's case in appeal hearings against decisions made on Homelessness Applications.
19. To participate in out of hours functions in the event of an emergency or major incident, including developing and staffing Rest Centres and the Emergency Operations Centre as required.
20. To carry out other duties, as and when required, including flexible working to support the Housing Service.
21. To own and operate your own vehicle and to use this vehicle for Council business.
22. Promote equality as an integral part of the role, treating everyone with fairness and dignity.
23. Comply with WBC health and safety policies, procedures and rules, taking reasonable care of self and others.
24. Adhere to the standards set out in the WBC competency framework.

Scope (impact on/control of resources, people, money etc)

Assessing the scope of this job is best achieved using qualitative statements: the context of the work is the rationing of scarce resources, i.e. there are not enough affordable homes in West Berkshire.

- **Assessing households presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness:** Initial assessment and advice to all households presenting at the Local Authority as homeless or threatened with homelessness. The job requires identification and investigation of current circumstances and the ability to assist the households to remain safely in their current accommodation or in securing alternative suitable accommodation.
- **Assist with the allocation decisions relating to temporary accommodation:**

The quality of decisions will impact on the efficient and effective use of the Council's temporary accommodation, Housing Association temporary accommodation and the avoidance of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. It will also impact on the efficient management of the temporary accommodation in terms of the mix of tenants, e.g. the insensitive allocation of potentially violent or vulnerable tenants.

- **Threshold Loan Applications:**

The decision here is whether or not to commit the Council to a loan or guarantee to the maximum of £1,500 per households to assist them with the advance rent and deposit required by private landlords. Default on loans and guarantees leads to a financial loss to the Council but, more importantly, undermine the credibility of the scheme with private landlords.

- **Assessing homeless applications** under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This job requires assessing households' eligibility, homelessness, whether they've got a local connection, priority need and whether they've done anything deliberately to make themselves homeless. It also involves maintaining a database, informing households of decisions made and dealing with appeals.

- **Developing excellent relationships with local landlords** in order to reduce the risk of homelessness to residents and to increase the supply of good quality, affordable privately rented accommodation

Person Specification	Essential/ Desirable	Internal Use Only
Qualifications		
Educated to degree level (Graduate) in a Housing-related subject or equivalent and must have GCSE grade C or above (or equivalent) in Maths and English	E	1
Professional membership of the CIH	D	1
Experience		
Experience of resolving housing issues	E	1
Experience in negotiation and influencing people	E	2
A minimum of two years' experience in a front-line housing service	E	3
Experience in multi-agency working	D	1
Some experience of working with households with complex needs, social, medical or mental health issues	E	4
Experience of working in a fluid environment and the ability to adapt to meet current needs	E	5
Experience of drafting and making S184 decisions	E	6
Experience of investigating Part 7 applications	E	7
Experience of developing PHPs (Personalised Housing Plans)	E	8
Knowledge and understanding		
Good working knowledge of homelessness legislation including but not limited to the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and other related legislation	E	1
Good understanding of housing advice, options and homelessness, including law relating to landlord and tenant relationships, prevention of eviction, harassment, basic guidance on money advice, the Matrimonial Homes Act, domestic violence, Children Act, proactive advice on other housing issues, e.g. disrepair, grants.	D	1
Good working knowledge of welfare benefits including but not limited	D	2

to Local Housing allowance and universal credit.		
Skills and abilities		
Good level of computer literacy	E	1
Ability to use Outlook, and a web browser to access information	E	2
Ability to use Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc)	E	3
Will possess good oral and written communication skills and will be able to communicate effectively at different levels with different client groups.	E	4
Ability to analyse written information and establish/revise procedures	E	5
Ability to manage own workload and balance competing demands in a highly pressurised environment	E	6
Ability to take control of challenging situations instructing households and/or outside organisations	E	7
Ability to work effectively as a team member	E	8
Work-related personal qualities		
High degree of self-motivation and initiative	E	1
A reliable and flexible attitude to work	E	2
Other work-related requirements		
Full UK driving licence and use of a car for work purposes	E	1
Ability to work flexibly to attend evening meetings with landlords, households and within the Council	E	2
This role has been identified as public facing in accordance with Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2017; the requirement to fulfil all spoken aspects of the role with confidence in English applies.	E	3
Enhanced DBS check with relevant barred list/s	No	
Is this post politically restricted?	No	