

Job Description

Job title	Housing Options Triage Officer
Directorate	PLACE : Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Division	Strategic Housing
Range	MPR 3
Reports to	Housing Options Team Leader

Main purpose of the job:

To be the first point of contact in a customer focused front line Housing Solutions Service providing timely and sometimes immediate housing advice to customers on a range of housing options, providing information, guidance and signposting on available benefits and services and referral to a Housing Officer if required.

Provide homelessness prevention advice to customers on housing options including social housing, shared ownership, other forms of low-cost home ownership, disabled adaptations, family mediation, supported housing and how to access private rented housing e.g. rent deposit schemes, discretionary housing payments, homeless prevention fund and charitable support.

To act in a supporting capacity to our Housing Options Officers carrying out homelessness needs assessments.

To provide a customer focused, pro-active service to help residents secure their housing choices.

To co-ordinate and provide responses to all housing need & housing options queries including emails, housing register correspondence, phone calls, temporary accommodation queries and resettlement queries.

To support clients to register and access the Council Housing Register along with provide advice and assistance inline with the allocation policy.

To make timely and accurate records of all action in relation to client casework and to ensure client files are up to date and comprehensive. To follow case management procedures and processes ensuring the correct standards are followed.

Liaise with stakeholders in a way that promotes the [One Medway Council Plan](#) and embeds our [values and behaviours](#).

Accountabilities and outcomes:

Provide emotional and practical support to those suffering from homelessness.

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Responding to housing emergencies

To provide a comprehensive frontline service to customers seeking advice and assistance with regards to their housing needs, irrespective of tenure, either in person or by telephone aimed at assisting members of the public in finding appropriate housing solutions, providing information in a variety of formats on a broad range of alternatives from house purchase, low-cost home.

Undertake assessments with client that are approaching as homeless or threatened with homelessness or require housing assistance and are completed in accordance with Pt 7 duties and the department processes, ensuring they are conducted in a timely manner, with adequate preparation and all admin tasks are completed within the departments procedures and homeless legislation guidelines ensuring that we are legally compliant

To provide customers with expert, professional, comprehensive advice and information on all aspects of housing options work specific to their assessed needs: including undertaking basic financial and benefits assessments and signposting to appropriate services.

To liaise, establish, maintain and develop links with Social Care teams, health providers, Registered Providers, private landlords and other statutory or voluntary agencies as appropriate and ensure that referrals are made as necessary, recorded and followed up as required. Build and maintain relationships with both clients and team members.

To complete enquiries to support the Housing Options Officers to assess homelessness applications.

To be able to adapt working practises to work with vulnerable people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Maintain an extensive, up-to-date, in-depth knowledge of housing allocations and homelessness legislation, codes of guidance, case law and share learning with colleagues to ensure that the Council meets its relevant statutory obligations towards households approaching the service in terms of opportunity to join the Council's Housing register and/or any homelessness duties owed to them.

Maintain accurate recording of all documents, data and notes using the councils case management system and thus adhering to the GDPR and data control guidelines and ensuring there is accurate HCLIC reporting

May be required to attend outreach housing surgeries at other locations throughout the district as and when necessary. May also be required to represent the Housing Needs Section at meetings, working groups etc.

Maintain awareness and knowledge of Safeguarding issues and as per the service procedures complete referrals and or escalate as appropriate.

To maximise personal productivity, minimise duplication and errors; and manage our information efficiently and securely to reduce risk, though effective use of Office 365 and our internal IT systems and applications.

Actively challenge and seek to eliminate any directly or indirectly discriminatory practice or behaviours.

Demonstrate awareness and understanding of other people's behavioural, physical, social and welfare needs and ensure that reasonable care is taken at all times for the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other persons

To co-ordinate and provide sensitive and empathetic responses to all general homelessness queries including emails, phone calls, housing register correspondence and temporary accommodation enquiries to facilitate safe and supportive relationships

To support the Homelessness Service team to maintain accurate records relating to income and expenditure associated with applications.

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This post will assist in the development and maintenance of multi-directorate and multi-agency working and contact will involve liaison with members of the public.

You will undertake work which has from time-to-time contact with, or work for, other people (other than immediate work colleagues) which, through their personal circumstances or behaviour place emotional demands on the jobholder. (Personal behaviour at this level may include a person who is upset because of their personal circumstances, unwell or has a disability).

At the discretion of the Head of Service, such other activities as may from time to time be agreed consistent with the nature of the job described above.

Key Corporate Accountabilities:

To work with colleagues to achieve service plan objectives and targets.

To understand and actively keep up to date with GDPR responsibilities, including completing regular refresher training.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: all employees are required to act in such a way that safeguards the health and well-being of children and vulnerable adults.

As a corporate parent, all council employees are responsible for ensuring the well-being and positive outcomes of Medway's care-experienced children and young people.

To participate in the Performance Appraisal process and contribute to the identification of own and team development needs utilising the Career Progression Framework.

Work in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and improving the quality of life and opportunities for everyone living and working in Medway.

To ensure full compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Council's Health and Safety Policy and all locally agreed safe methods of work.

To fully understand and be aware of the commitment to the duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to prevent crime and disorder.

Promote the Medway Carbon Neutral by 2050 commitment; supporting the Council action plan to ensure we play our part in addressing the climate emergency.

Medway Council is a Category One responder in relation to the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and as a result all staff working for the Authority may be asked to carry out Category One response duties or stand into the role of another member of staff who is responding to a Major Civil Incident.

Organisation:

This role reports to the <Homeless Team Leader .

The post holder will not be required to line manage others but may be required to direct, coordinate or train other employees.

The post holder will be required to liaise with all stakeholders both internal and external to the organisation.

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Working Style:

The post holder will be based at Kingsley House, Gillingham. In some cases the jobholder can work from home, however much of this role is face to face with members of the public, and appointments are carried out at Kingsley House.

Person specification

All criteria at level A are considered essential unless stated otherwise.

Qualifications

Level A

- A good standard of general education (e.g. Level 2, GCSEs) including Maths and English or
- Equivalent housing qualification at Level 2

Level B (in addition to level A criteria)

- Completion of role specific training as identified during Performance Appraisal Review

Level C (in addition to levels A and B)

- Completion of role specific training as identified during Performance Appraisal Review

Knowledge

Level A

- An understanding of the relevant legislation and regulations that applied to housing and homelessness
- An understanding and awareness of the issues affecting housing and homelessness
- Understanding of the causes of homelessness and social exclusion and approaches which seek to address this.
- An understanding of the issues affecting landlord and tenant including the grounds and process for recovering possession.
- Knowledge of the current welfare benefit systems
- A working knowledge of the different tenancy types and how they can be legally ended
- An awareness of the local agencies and services available to customers both statutory and voluntary
- Understanding of the needs and challenges facing people who are or have been homeless, including trauma; addiction, mental and physical health; exclusion and multiple disadvantages.
- Knowledge of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults' procedures as it affects the role
- Understanding of welfare benefits and associated challenges faced by those sleeping rough

Level B (in addition to level A criteria)

- Knowledge of landlord and tenant law, including the grounds and process for recovering possession.
- Knowledge of the current Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, Relevant Case Law and its application.
- Knowledge of housing and homelessness legislation such as the Housing Act 1996; Homelessness Code of Guidance; and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Knowledge of the housing options and best practice available to relieve and prevent homelessness
- Knowledge of best practices and initiatives on preventing rough sleeping

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Level C (in addition to levels A and B)

- Understanding of housing policies, regulations and case laws including Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
 - Knowledge of Landlord and Tenant Legislation, the Housing Act 1985, Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and Protection from Harassment Act
 - Knowledge of local social, justice and healthcare services and an ability to navigate systems and pathways into services
 - Knowledge of the current Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, Relevant Case Law and its application.
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Experience

Level A

- Experience of “front line” interviewing
- Experience of providing comprehensive housing advice on a wide range of matters and delivering an efficient and effective casework service.
- Experience of dealing with the public, often in difficult and stressful situations
- Experience of working in a demanding frontline facing service
- Experience of writing letters and reports to customers, professionals and partner agencies
- Experience of working in a demanding environment with the public
- Experience of keeping good and accurate records

Level B (in addition to level A criteria)

- Experience of working in a housing service preventing homelessness
- Proven success in preventing homelessness through imaginative problem-solving and skilful negotiation with excluders.
- Experience of developing and sustaining effective working relationships and works successfully in partnership with other services and organisations.
- Experience of managing a range of complex tasks, with competing demands, and successfully responding to changing circumstances and priorities.
- Proven experience of successfully managing a large caseload
- Proven experience of casework management, joint working and interagency liaison.
- Experience of managing a complex caseload

Level C (in addition to levels A and B)

- At least 2 years’ experience evidencable successful outcomes with homeless households
- Experience of conducting in-depth interviews to obtain relevant information and validate evidence to complete accurate assessments
- Experience of writing and issuing detailed, legal and robust s184 decision letters

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- Proven experience of successfully providing a high performing service that demonstrate effective employee behaviours
 - Demonstrable experience of initiating, building relationships with and working positively in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies.
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Skills

Level A

- Ability to gather, analyse and interpret information and exercise judgement
- Ability to gain, and retain, the confidence and respect of staff, service users and other contacts
- Able to work on own initiative
- Able to prioritise workloads and meet deadlines
- Excellent communication skills at all levels
- Developed negotiating skills
- Good written and oral communications skills
- Be confident and competent with standard IT packages
- Proven decision-making skills
- Good numeracy skills
- Able to work as part of a team and share/learn best practice, knowledge and expertise with/from colleagues
- Able to show a commitment to a high level of customer care and the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy
- Able to take responsibility for your own development
- Able to manage a caseload

Level B (in addition to level A criteria)

- Proven ability to interpret and explain complex legislation and guidance
- Ability to work within legal, political and policy constraints and to follow internal procedures
- Demonstrable ability to use well developed communication skills to present complex/sensitive information in an understandable way, to a range of audiences
- Ability to deal with high levels of work-related pressure, for example from deadlines, interruptions or conflicting demands.
- Able to develop the ability to cope with and control confrontational situations

Level C (in addition to levels A and B)

- Adopts an imaginative and innovative approach.
- Demonstrable ability to supervise, co-ordinate or train other employees where required

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- Promote good performance, developing clear, structured and efficient ways of managing workload and delivering results, challenging themselves and others to perform well, and to adhere to the Council's performance management systems
- Demonstrate the effective and efficient use of the full range of training resources for self-development and efficiency within the role