

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

JOB DESCRIPTION

Designation:	Homelessness Prevention and Assessment Officer	Grade:	SO2
Reports to (Designation):	Homelessness Prevention and Assessment Team Leader	Grade:	PO3
Directorate:	Housing Regeneration & Public Realm	Section:	Housing Needs

Main Purpose of the job:

- To provide a comprehensive high quality homeless prevention, support and advice service to all households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- To provide an assessment service to customers presenting to the Council to ascertain what duties are owed to them by the authority and what alternative housing options are available to them.
- To demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Homelessness legislation and case law coupled with hands-on experience of preventing homelessness and making statutory decisions.
- To develop specialist knowledge and skills in relation to customers required to enable the delivery of a flexible and responsive housing needs service that can effectively meet changing demands and customer pressures.
- To keep up to date, clear, accessible and accurate casework and data records and report on performance as required.

Summary of Responsibilities and Personal Duties:

1. To prevent and resolve homelessness within the borough through the provision of confidential and impartial advice and information to customers approaching the Housing Needs Service about their housing rights and obligations under legislation and Council policy either in Council offices or other locations as required.
2. To actively and positively promote and deliver the Council's homeless prevention agenda identifying appropriate housing options and utilizing the prevention tools available, such as DHP for customers that will resolve their accommodation problems and reduce the need for the provision of temporary accommodation within agreed timeframes.
3. To provide advice to customers in respect of the Council's obligations under PtVI and PtVII of the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011.
4. To fully investigate the circumstances of customers presenting to the Council as homeless and to determine in accordance with current legislation, case law and the Code of Guidance 2006 what duty the authority owes to them and to issue legally robust S184 decision letters accordingly.
5. To maintain detailed, accurate case notes and reports, update computerised records, conduct correspondence and respond to enquiries as required to efficiently progress cases to resolution.

6. To provide advice and practical assistance when required to customers in respect of security of tenure across all types of tenure, including matrimonial rights and attending court as needed in order to prevent homelessness.
7. To investigate landlord and tenant disputes including allegations of harassment and illegal eviction within the meaning of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and Protection from Harassment Act 1997, intervening and negotiating with all parties as required to prevent homelessness.
8. To provide information about debt counseling and money advice services to customers in rent or mortgage arrears including advice on the availability of welfare benefits and prioritizing debts, referring people to the DWP, Housing Benefit Service or CAB as appropriate.
9. To negotiate with landlords, Banks, Building Societies and other lenders, estate agents and solicitors on behalf of customers in rent or mortgage arrears.
10. To undertake a comprehensive assessment of vulnerable customers in respect of their support and housing related needs including the risk to themselves and others.
11. To develop and maintain a sound knowledge of the support needs of vulnerable single customers presenting to the Council for assistance including physical and mental health, substance misuse, offending, learning disabilities, independent living skills, education, training and employment needs.
12. To make appropriate referrals to supported accommodation services for vulnerable clients and ensure that a move on pathway is developed for each household as required.
13. To liaise with other statutory services as appropriate who may owe a duty to vulnerable customers under legislation other than the homelessness acts.

Personal Duties

1. To attend and represent the service at relevant stakeholder forums, case conferences and working groups as required or directed by a Line Manager.
2. To keep abreast of national and local legislative and policy developments, new initiatives and best practice in respect of housing, homelessness and homeless prevention and share with colleagues across the Housing Needs Service.
3. To answer members enquiries and draft responses to complaints / enquiries on individual cases as required.
4. To provide statistical information on performance as requested.
5. To positively participate in personal supervision sessions, team meetings and contribute to service development and planning.
6. To attend training either internally or externally provided as directed.
7. To be self servicing in respect of administrative tasks related to this role, including contemporaneous and accurate record keeping, file maintenance and responding to all enquiries by customers and other agencies.

8. To carry out all tasks in line with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy, Health & Safety Policy and Environmental Policy.
9. To carry out any other duties as required by the Director of Customer Services.

Internal Contacts: These will include the Housing Benefit Service, Council Tax Service, Social Care, Education Department and Crime Reduction Service.

External Contacts: This will include the DWP, CAB, Health Services, Registered providers and all voluntary agencies associated with homelessness and welfare or financial advice

To carry out the duties of the post with due regard to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and core values.

All employees are required to participate in the Performance Evaluation Scheme (PES) and to undertake appropriate training and development identified to enhance their work.

All employees are required to comply with the Council's Health & Safety policies and procedures at all times, taking due care for themselves, colleagues and members of the public.

Assist in carrying out the Council's environmental policy within the day to day activities of the post.

Undertake other duties, commensurate with the grade, as may reasonably be required.

Consideration will be given to restructuring the duties of this post for a disabled postholder

THIS JOB DESCRIPTION MAY NEED TO BE AMENDED BY THE DIRECTORATE TO
MEET THE CHANGING NEEDS OF THE SERVICE.

Number of fully managed staff: None

Title:	Grade	No of posts
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Number of partially managed staff: None

Title:	Grade	No of posts
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PERSON SPECIFICATION

JOB TITLE: Homelessness Prevention and Assessment Officer **POST NO:**

DEPARTMENT: **GRADE: SO2**

Note to Candidates

The Person Specification is a picture of the skills, knowledge and experience needed to carry out the job. It has been used to draw up the advert and will also be used in the shortlisting and interview process for this post.

Those categories marked 'S' will be used especially for the purpose of shortlisting.

If you are a disabled person, but are unable to meet some of the job requirements specifically because of your disability, please address this in your application. If you meet all the other criteria you will be shortlisted and we will explore jointly with you if there are ways in which the job can be changed to enable you to meet the requirements.

Equal Opportunities

Commitment to implement the Council's Equal Opportunities policies.
Awareness of Equal Opportunities issues.

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Knowledge

Thorough knowledge of the legislation and duties owed to homeless persons by the Council under Part V1 and Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002 & Localism Act 2011 **S**

Knowledge of the duties owed to young people under the Childrens Act 1989

Detailed and extensive knowledge of the Code of Guidance issued by the Dept for Communities & Local Government for local authorities 2006

Detailed and up to date knowledge of all relevant case law pertaining to homelessness and its application **S**

Knowledge of Landlord & Tenant Legislation, the Housing Act 1985 and Protection from Eviction Act 1977 **S**

Detailed working knowledge of homeless prevention initiatives and their application and effectiveness

Detailed working knowledge of the welfare benefit system and its application **S**

Detailed working knowledge of other agencies, both statutory and voluntary providing relevant advice and assistance to customers under alternative legislation and in all forms of tenure **S**

A detailed understanding and application of the terms and conditions contained in the range of tenancy agreements across all tenures **S**

Knowledge of the housing problems faced by an inner London borough **S**

Aptitude

- Passionate about the role of housing in shaping people's life chances
- Ability to balance respect and empathy for the client with the ability to impartially scrutinize evidence in casework
- Demonstrate a positive attitude towards customer service, putting them at the heart of the service;
- Good emotional control
- Be self motivated and be able to work under pressure
- Demonstrate a flexible and innovative approach to problem solving
- Demonstrate an ability to deliver the Council's homeless prevention agenda
- Able to work on own initiative and meet conflicting deadlines
- Able to negotiate solutions that are commercially beneficial to the Council
- Ability to be pro-active and creative in preventing homelessness and resolving complex customer problems
- Able to keep abreast of new case law in respect of homelessness as it is developed and ability to interpret it's effect on working practices

Skills

A high level of ICT skills to use packages such as word, excel, outlook and bespoke databases

Excellent interviewing skills to extract relevant information from customers and complete accurate assessments

Excellent communication skills at all levels

Excellent negotiating skills with varied parties, including partner agencies and internal colleagues

Excellent written skills to be able to produce detailed and accurate reports and letters to the public and other professionals

Ability to avoid and manage conflict and stress

Experience

Experience of composing and issuing detailed and legally robust S184 decision letters in line with the duties owed to customers under the homelessness legislation **S**

Experience of producing detailed and accurate reports and letters to the public and other professionals

Experience of working in a demanding front line service in a housing environment **S**

Experience of "front line" interviewing and of dealing effectively with confrontational situations **S**

Experience of working with vulnerable client groups and providing appropriate support as required

Experience of giving detailed advice on a range of welfare benefits to customers to enable them to resolve their accommodation difficulties

Experience of working effectively as a part of a busy team as well as being able to manage your own case load **S**

Experience of advocating on customer's behalf with other statutory and voluntary agencies and members of the public **S**

General Education

A good standard of general education

Undertaken some form of housing related training or alternative housing related experience

Personal Qualities

Be flexible in working across the wider Housing Needs Service as required

Circumstances

Required to deliver the housing needs service at different locations and Council offices

Required to work outside of normal office hours in times of high customer demand

Required to deliver out reach surgeries and conduct home visits

DBS Disclosure Required? **No** ☐ **Basic** ☐ **Enhanced** ☐

(Tick as appropriate – guidance available from your HR Advisor)

Physical

Generally candidates must meet the standard Lewisham requirements for the post

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