

Northumberland County Council

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: Homelessness and Housing Options Officer	Director/Service/Sector: Community Services & Housing		Office Use
Band: 6	Workplace: Countywide Service		JE ref: 2149
Responsible to: Principal Homelessness and Housing Options Officer	Date: September 2011	Manager Level:	HRMS ref:
<p>Job Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To interview / visit clients who are potentially homeless to assess their housing situation prior to any application being made under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). To prevent such clients from becoming homeless by providing housing information, advice and assistance to licensees tenants, landlords and accommodation agents and owner occupiers with regard to security of tenure, harassment and illegal eviction, terms of lease, repairs etc. To support the Principal Homelessness and Housing Options Officer in developing new preventative initiatives, reviewing emerging policies and best practice, assist the strategic team in researching the suitability of these locally and where appropriate working towards their implementation across the county The postholder will be committed to the primary council objectives to ensure that a customer focused service is provided and that service delivery is to the highest standards of customer care and quality. 			
Resources	Staff	Support junior staff, trainees or learners as appropriate.	
	Finance	Be responsible for a small Homelessness Prevention budget and the authority for the allocation of funds to an agreed limit.	
	Physical	Responsible for confidential valuable documents e.g. financial and benefit documentation.	
	Clients	Daily contact with vulnerable people seeking housing options, those who are homeless and those who may be at risk of becoming homeless.	
<p>Duties and key result areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the Housing Options service ensuring the provision of a high quality, responsive and customer focused service, which meets Council and company objectives. Implement policies and procedures as required by the Principal Homelessness and Housing Options Officer and Housing Services Manager that will contribute to the development of the service and ensure continuous improvement. Respond to enquiries, providing advice to customers in relation to housing advice, homelessness and homelessness prevention. Interview all applicants claiming to be homeless or threatened with homelessness and carry out comprehensive enquiries to determine their claim and the duty owed under legislation, ensuring that all aspects of the legal responsibilities in responding to homelessness applications are met. Effective management of the housing register which will include: Processing applications for applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. 			

Correct assessment in accordance with agreed policy and law.

Update the housing system on a regular basis.

- Take action to prevent homelessness occurring and to use agreed housing options toolkits to minimise the need for Temporary Accommodation.
- Contribute to the development and upkeep of the prevention / housing options toolkit on a regular basis.
- Arrange emergency or temporary accommodation where appropriate for applicants.
- On call for out of office hours emergency calls for homeless applicants.
- Ensure the accurate recording and reporting of data and customer information to ensure high level of performance and standards of customer service at all times.
- Develop effective and constructive relationships with colleagues and external contacts in order to promote effective partnership arrangements for the delivery of high quality services.
- Work effectively with customers, stakeholders and partners to ensure effective engagement in the service and to ensure that key service objectives are met. Assist the Principal Homelessness and Housing Options Officer in strategically working with other agencies to promote joint working and assist in the development of associated strategies.
- Carry out risk assessments on clients due to be interviewed by Homelessness and Housing Options Officer at various locations
- Mediate between clients and family/friends and other agents when appropriately required.
- Monitor the budgets for the service, maintaining accurate records in line with required procedures.
- Promote the prevention service through outreach work in partnership with other agencies.
- Carryout Welfare Benefits calculations in order to address client's financial status.
- Attend meetings out of normal office hours as required by the role.
- Proactively seek out information and apply judgement to identify solutions using own initiative.
- Take responsibility in helping clients access the full range of services and support they require.
- Comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
- Offer Registered Social Landlord tenants pre-court and pre-eviction appointments.
- Provide good quality accurate advice to both private and social Landlords and tenants relating to good practice and legal rights, duties and responsibilities, including County Court procedures and regulations ensuring appropriate procedures are followed, that parties have a proper understanding of their position and attempting to reach legitimate, mutually agreeable solutions through negotiation, to try and resolve any conflict at an early stage.
- Referring cases to the Councils Legal Team when recommending enforcement action against Landlords when appropriate.
- Take reasonable care of the health and safety of self, other persons and resources whilst at work, ensuring that the responsibilities placed upon the Company under the Health and Safety at Work Act are performed.
- Implement and comply with excellent customer service
- To liaise with statutory and non-statutory agencies regarding housing needs issues, signposting clients and making referrals for a service.

- To co-ordinate information on local housing support services and advice agencies and to act as an information point for staff on services that are available locally.
- To think laterally and adopt innovative approaches to prevent homelessness.

The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and extent of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.

Work Arrangements

Physical Requirements:	Ability to drive The work involves the need to visit sites countywide on a regular and routine basis. Flexible working the ability to work occasional evening or weekend. Post based indoors
Transport requirements:	
Working patterns:	
Working conditions:	

Northumberland County Council
PERSON SPECIFICATION

Post Title: Homelessness and Housing Options Officer	Director/Service/Sector:	Ref: 2149
Essential	Desirable	Assess by
Qualifications and Knowledge		
<p>Good standard of education to NVQ Level 3 or equivalent. Understands the diverse functions of a large complex public organisation. An active appreciation of the procedural and practical issues relating to the service. An active awareness of and active interest in the current issues facing the service. Actively undertaking ongoing continuous professional and personal development. Detailed working knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation including Housing Act 1996, Homeless Act 2002, Landlord and Tenant Law, Protection from Eviction Act and associated housing law. Understanding of the Council's housing management and lettings policies. Provide specialist advice and guidance. Sound understanding of housing policies and procedures in a public sector environment.</p> <p>Ability to provide initial advice regarding finance and welfare benefits.</p> <p>Understands the relationship between costs, quality, customer care and performance and actively monitors progress within the Department.</p>	<p>Educated to Degree / HND or equivalent level and/ or relevant professional qualification Understand needs of vulnerable, under-represented and hard to reach groups.</p>	
Experience		
<p>Thorough Knowledge and experience in a relevant context and service. Evidence of work experience in selecting and applying the full range of professional methods, tools and techniques in a wide range of work situations. An evidenced track record as a successful advisor. Experience in engaging effectively with others and building productive partnerships. Experience in contributing to the development and implementation of projects to successfully achieve set objectives. Good understanding of Housing Benefit and associated benefits.</p>	<p>Experience in a particular relevant specialist area. Relevant experience in designing and drafting policies, procedures and other technical documents.</p>	
Skills and competencies		
<p>Excellent IT skills and ability to understand and develop the use of ITC to achieve work objectives. Confident and competent in expressing own views and an active participant in internal and external meetings. Excellent communication, negotiating and interpersonal skills. Numerate and able to analyse business related statistics. Ability to work methodically and systematically. Able to work alone using own initiative as well as part of a team. Ability to use initiative and to make appropriate decisions in line with guidance and regulations. Adopts a collaborative approach to work.</p>	<p>Advanced skills in Microsoft Office.</p>	

<p>Clear understanding of the needs of customers. The ability to gain relevant information quickly and effectively. Prepares written, verbal and other media to best professional standards. Is an effective advocate for the Directorate both within and externally. Maintains a professional demeanour in stressful and difficult situations. Support colleagues and demonstrate relevant work processes.</p>		
Physical, mental, emotional and environmental demands		
<p>Normally works from a seated position with some need to walk, bend or carry items. Need to maintain general awareness with lengthy periods of enhanced concentration. Regular contact with difficult public/clients in distress. An awareness of issues faced by people who are vulnerable and who have complex needs. Some exposure to working outdoors. Work in a highly pressured and stressful environment on a regular basis.</p>		
Motivation		
<p>Customer focused and able to deliver within tight timescales. Demonstrates and encourages high standards of honesty, integrity, openness and respect for others. Helps to create and encourages a positive work culture, in which diverse, individual contributions and perspectives are valued. Proactive and achievement orientated Able to work with minimum supervision. A strong corporate orientation and a commitment to tackling issues in a non-departmental manner. Dependable, reliable and keeps good time. Flexible and Highly motivated.</p>		
Other		
Able to meet the transport requirements of the post		

Key to assessment methods; (a) application form, (i) interview, (r) references, (t) ability tests (q) personality questionnaire (g) assessed group work, (p) presentation, (o) others e.g. case studies/visit