

Job Description

Job Title: Housing Advisor	Service Area: Homelessness Prevention & Advice	
Directorate: Inclusive Economy & Housing	Post Number:	Evaluation Number: 7191A – Sc6 7191B – SO1 7191C – SO2
Grade: Scale 6/SO1/SO2 Career Grade	Date last updated: March 2024	

People at the heart of everything we do

We are committed to putting people – Newham residents and Council staff – at the heart of all we do. Our approach is a collaborative joint enterprise between residents, the Mayor, Members, Council staff and the Corporate Management Team.

Equality and diversity

We are committed to and champion equality and diversity in all aspects of employment with the London Borough of Newham. All employees are expected to understand and promote our Equality and Diversity policy in the course of their work.

Protecting our staff and services

Adherence to health and safety requirements and proper risk management is required from all employees in so far as is relevant to their role. All employees are expected to understand and promote good health and safety practices and manage risks appropriately.

Corporate parent

We believe that every member of staff working for Newham Council should understand and fulfil our corporate parenting responsibilities for our looked after children that we have under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Scale 6	Trainee Housing Advisor
Scale S01	Assistant Housing Advisor
Scale S02	Housing Advisor
Progression to Scales S01 & S02 is at the discretion of Senior Manager Prevention/Relief having regard to the competence level of the post holder at 3 monthly review. Expectation is trainee's should be a Housing Advisor (SO2) within 18months.	

Overall Purpose of Job

The Job Description relates to the role as a Housing Advisor within Newham Homeless Prevention & Advice Service (HPAS). The postholder will support the work of HPAS in the delivery of the Council's statutory homelessness prevention and assessment service.

The key roles of a Housing Advisor are as follows:

1. Assess people's housing need as required by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
2. Manage a caseload of homeless applications.
3. Seek to prevent and relieve homelessness.
4. Create and maintain personal housing plans.
5. Provide a service which has a high levels of good customer care and empathy throughout.

Job Context

The postholder will report to a Team Leader or Manager within HPAS and will have no formal line management or budget management responsibility.

The postholder will however be responsible for preventing homelessness and assessing homeless application on behalf of the Local Authority with varying levels of support and supervision.

The postholder will support the objectives of HPAS and may be required to undertake a number of roles to ensure holistic training, experience and knowledge. The postholder will be required to provide advice assistance to members of the public and will support the wider needs of HPAS to deliver the service.

On occasion the postholder may be required to work some evenings to meet service requirements, this are unlikely to be more than five occasions per year and likely to be no more than once a year.

The postholder will be required to undertake assessments as per the needs of the Service. Whilst generally a remote service, assessments are conducted face-to-face whether within a Housing Hub or a One Stop Shop setting.

Grading

A postholder's starting salary and grading will be based on both qualification and experience at the time of employment, in addition to an assessment of their competence against the job description including 'Person Specification'. The responsibilities and expectations pertaining to each grade are outlined below in the 'Key Tasks and Accountabilities' and 'Person Specification' sections. Officers will normally start at the bottom of the salary scale band within the grade that they qualify for.

Progression to Scales S01 & S02 is at the discretion of Senior Manager Prevention/Relief having regard to the competence level of the post holder at 3 monthly review. Expectation is trainee's should be a Housing Advisor (SO2) within 18months.

Key Tasks and Accountabilities – At all levels

(All career grades with varying levels of support as outlined in Role Summaries and Personal Specification)

Key tasks and accountabilities are intended to be a guide to the range and level of work expected of the post holder. This is not an exhaustive list of all tasks that may fall to the post holder and employees will be expected to carry out such other reasonable duties which may be required from time to time. Whilst all officers are able to receive support from line managers, in general post holders should be able to undertake these tasks and accountabilities without a need of support unless states.

1. To provide an effective, customer-friendly and efficient service to clients who are often vulnerable and with complex needs who are presenting with housing problems; to support them in keeping their current home, or in accessing a new home in the public or private housing sector.
2. To advise clients, either face-to-face, via videolink or over the phone, on full range of housing options, in the context of a high demand London local authority. This includes appropriate intervention if threatened with homelessness, assistance to secure private rented accommodation, hostels, supported

housing, refuges, etc, and any actions to make accommodation more affordable and accessible. To assist people to move out of London, if desired.

3. To provide a professional and effective housing options interview and homelessness investigation service; taking a full application from the service user and issuing Personalised Housing Plans in preventing or relieving homelessness irrespective of the person's priority need or intentionality status.
4. To assess clients' housing requirements in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. A high percentage of people presenting will be vulnerable and it is essential to assess needs accurately and in accordance with all relevant legislation, including Housing Act 1996 (as amended), the Care Act 2014 and the Children's Act 1989 and all relevant housing legislation.
5. To complete the Personalised Housing Plan in conjunction with the client, agreeing all reasonable steps which will be taken by the Council and the person to prevent or relieve their homelessness. To produce this in a timely manner and to keep under review throughout the duration of the Prevention and/or Relief Duty.
6. To collate and analyse initial information and documentation relating to a client's circumstances using available prevention tools and deciding in line with new legislation when to move an application from a prevention or relief stage to the final duty the council may owe the applicant.
7. To assess and administer Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) applications, ensuring that necessary actions are captured as *reasonable steps* within Personalised Housing Plans, to either sustain an existing tenancy, or secure alternative affordable accommodation. Extension of DHPs incumbent upon engagement with these *reasonable steps*.
8. To work closely with other professionals, such as Social Workers, Probation Officers and Welfare Benefit Advisers, creating a strong and effective relationship, whilst maintaining the provisions of the full range of housing duties placed on the local authority and as set out in statute and caselaw.
9. To maintain a regular and constructive relationship with the individual or family throughout their homeless application, ensuring that they are engaged in the *reasonable steps* agreed, and that the postholder completes the *reasonable steps* agreed on the part of the local authority, all within the designated timescales.
10. To use relevant identity/credit software that enables the service to check and verify the accuracy of a homeless approach or application, and the circumstances affecting the client.
11. To write and issue statutory S184 decision letters, letters of referral to other authorities where an applicant's local connection lies elsewhere, and outcome letters, to advise the applicant of the outcome of their initial interview.
12. To carry out detailed enquiries on cases subject to statutory review proceedings as directed by Team Leaders or Senior Managers.
13. To comply with all relevant statutory requirements, Government Guidance and Codes of conduct, Newham policies and procedures, professional and performance standards and good housing and homelessness prevention practice. (Trainee and Assistant Housing Advisors with support)
14. To ensure full and accurate records of all clients, all advice and support provided. To maintain accurate written and computer records, reports, & other monitoring information as required in connection with the various duties and case management.
15. To develop effective working relationships with colleagues within Newham, other councils and statutory bodies, external agencies, clients and landlords as well as voluntary and other housing organisations.
16. To advise clients of available tenancy support services including income maximisation, Discretionary Housing Payments, under occupation schemes, mutual exchange, debt and rent arrears advice and HB support.
17. To assist in developing full range of information and publicity for all clients as well as internal procedures. To understand the value of information to the council and to contribute to good information

governance by keeping information safe, accurate and up to date and available to those who need it. The post holder is required to abide by the council's information governance policies.

18. To provide advice services to clients through personal, online or telephone interviews; correspondence, advocacy, reception, home visiting, outreach work, on behalf of the Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service.
19. To deal with enquiries, complaints and correspondence from clients and their advocates, including solicitors, councillors, MPs, the ombudsman and other housing providers, in line with the Council's complaints and enquiries procedure. This may include preparing information to support court cases for which the post-holder is responsible.

To undertake all requirements listed below:

20. To be a champion for excellent customer service delivery and customer care and contribute to the development and delivery of an integrated service.
21. To be self-serving with respect to administration, case record keeping and other related duties and utilise IT systems to update and record information required according to guidance and established procedures.
22. To participate in appraisals, one to ones, objective settings, personal development plans and working group meetings and take a full and active role in service development, including service reviews.
23. To carry out the duties of the post in accordance with the Data Protection Act, the Health & Safety at Work Act and other relevant legislation, as well as Council policies, procedures, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
24. To carry out the duties of this post with due regard to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and to actively promote and uphold the Council's HEART values.
25. To take responsibility, appropriate to the post, for ensuring compliance with council policies and procedures aimed at promoting and safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable children and adults.
26. To take responsibility, appropriate to the post for promoting diversity including tackling racism and good race, ethnic & community relations.
27. To undertake any other duties appropriate to the grade, that may be required. These may be varied from time to time to meet the needs of the service.

Role Summaries:

Trainee Housing Advisor – Scale 6:

To undertake a programme of training and support tailored to individual needs to acquire the required knowledge and experience and develop the skills necessary to process homeless applications made under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and discharging any subsequent duties. To prevent homelessness in accordance with the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act, associated Code of Guidance, case law and best practice.

With support, assess people's housing need, reflecting their specific circumstances, creating tailored Personal Housing Plans to either prevent or relieve homelessness and possess a fundamental understanding of the vulnerabilities and complexities presented by individuals with a curiosity to learn more.

To manage a caseload comprising of less complex, time critical and/or sensitive cases with support including weekly case reviews and monitoring, mentorship and on demand support. Will only draw up personal housing plans and decisions with direct support.

Able to build upon customer care skills to a higher level and display empathy throughout whilst learning to manage expectations.

Assistant Housing Advisor - SO1:

To build upon your foundational knowledge more independently and practically more independently with reduced supervision and support. Assistant Housing Advisors have the required knowledge and experience to process most homeless applications made under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and are able to identify which duties can and should be discharged. Assistants have sufficient skills and knowledge to prevent homelessness in accordance with the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act and associated Code of Guidance and will seek support with regards to case law and best practice.

Assistants are able to assess most people's housing need, reflecting their specific circumstances, creating tailored Personal Housing Plans to either prevent or relieve homelessness and with some understanding of the vulnerabilities and complexities presented by individuals with an ability to know when to seek further support.

To independently manage a caseload comprising of some complex, time critical and/or sensitive cases with support including weekly case reviews and monitoring and support options. Able to draw up personal housing plans without support. Expectation that decisions letters will be drafted by the officer though not issued without support.

To develop high levels of good customer care whilst displaying empathy throughout understanding that we may not always be able to give people what they want, but we should always be honest and treat them with respect, in consideration of their situation.

Housing Advisor:

Able to make every conceivable effort to prevent homelessness where possible through the provision of tailored advice, advocacy, negotiation, mediation and exploration of all suitable options. To assess complex and vulnerable individuals and families, based on their housing need and make appropriate decisions in accordance with the appropriate legislation (eg Housing Act 1996 (as amended), Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Children's Act, Care Act and Welfare Benefit Reform Act).

Able to manage a complex and demanding case load in a busy and often challenging environment, ensuring all options are thoroughly explored. Housing Advisors are able to independently draw up personal housing plans and issue decisions. Housing Advisor's will be required to undertake home visits where appropriate.

The post holder will be required to be innovative, dynamic and solutions focussed to prevent clients from becoming homeless and explore all housing options. In addition to this the post holder will contribute to the design and operational practice of the Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service.

To maintain high levels of good customer care and empathy throughout. We may not always be able to give people what they want, but we should always be honest and treat them with respect, in consideration of their situation.

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

The criteria listed in this Person Specification are all essential to the job. Where the Method of Assessment is stated to be the Application Form, your application needs to demonstrate clearly and concisely how you meet each of the criteria, even if other methods of assessment are also shown. If you do not address these criteria fully, or if we do not consider that you meet them, you will not be shortlisted. Please give specific examples wherever possible.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We are committed to and champion equality and diversity in all aspects of employment with the London Borough of Newham. All employees are expected to understand and promote our Equality and Diversity Policy in the course of their work.

PROTECTING OUR STAFF AND SERVICES

Adherence to Health and Safety requirements and proper risk management is required from all employees in so far as is relevant to their role. All employees are expected to understand and promote good Health and Safety practices and manage risks appropriately.

CRITERIA- Housing Advisor	Assistant	Trainee	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
KNOWLEDGE: A working knowledge of the relevant legislation relating to housing and homelessness, Codes of Guidance and case law.	A working knowledge of housing and homelessness legislation and Codes of Guidance.	An understanding that housing and homelessness legislation is crucial to the role.	Application, Test and Interview
Broad knowledge and understanding of the housing and support needs of homeless and housing applicants and tenants.	Some knowledge and understanding of the housing and support needs of homeless and housing applicants and tenants.	Some demonstrable understanding of the challenges face by Local Authorities' and residents with regard to housing.	Application and Interview
Understanding of the housing issues facing a high demand London local authority.	Understanding of the housing issues facing the local authority.	Understanding that there are challenges with housing for the local authority.	Application and Interview
Excellent knowledge of negotiation and mediation techniques and their practical application	Knowledge of negotiation and mediation techniques and their practical application	Understanding how and why negotiation and mediation techniques have a practical application.	Application and Interview

EDUCATION/QUALIFICATIONS		Educated to degree level standard or equivalent or demonstrable suitable experience	
SKILLS, ABILITIES & EXPERIENCE:			
Housing Advisor	Assistant Housing Advisor	Trainee Housing Advisor	
Experience of dealing with a diverse and vulnerable clientele Experience of producing high quality written communications to a corporate standard Experience of providing advice and information to members of the public Experience of working in a service within a pressurised and high profile environment within a multi-disciplinary team, providing a quality service. Experience of achieving performance targets and meeting departmental objectives	Experience of dealing with a diverse clientele Experience of using different IT systems in order to manage caseloads, monitor delivery of targets. Experience of producing high quality written communications to a corporate standard Experience of providing quality advice and information to members of the public and of handling complaints and enquiries	Experience of using different IT systems. Experience of providing information to members of the public and of handling enquiries. Experience of producing high quality written communications	Application and Interview Application and interview Application and Interview Application and Interview Application and Interview
PERSONAL STYLE AND BEHAVIOUR: <u>Focuses on People:</u> Excellent interpersonal skills including active listening, advocacy and a win-win approach with all stakeholders <u>Takes Ownership:</u> Proactive in seizing opportunities and takes responsibility for ensuring the best possible outcome for clients <u>Works Collaboratively:</u> Ability to gain, and retain, the confidence and respect of staff, service users and other contacts. <u>Communicates Effectively:</u> Excellent communication skills both verbally and in writing, including the ability to produce detailed technical letters and reports. <u>Focuses on Results:</u> Ability to gather information and interpret complex issues e.g. legislation and case law			Application and Interview Application and Interview Application and Interview Application, Test and Interview Application, Test and Interview

quickly, to think creatively about problems and identify solutions. <u>Calmness under pressure:</u> Ability to thrive in a challenging and pressurised environment, with competing service demands and tight deadlines <u>Self-starter:</u> Ability to work unsupervised, prioritise workloads and achieve targets and deadlines. <u>Respects and understands individual's needs:</u> Ability to work effectively and even-handedly with people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances.		Application and Interview Application and Interview Application and Interview
OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Willing to work outside normal working hours to respond to emergencies or attend meetings as required. Demonstrate an understanding of the issues relating to equal opportunities in service delivery and provision and to actively promote ways of eradicating racism, sexism and other forms of negative discrimination through the Council's policies and procedures. To comply with the Council's Health & Safety Policies.		Application Application Application