

Job Description

Job Title: Reviews Officer		Service Area: Homelessness Prevention & Advice	
Directorate: Inclusive Economy & Housing		Post Number:	Evaluation Number:
Grade: PO3		Date last updated: February 2021	

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.

Overall Purpose of Job

To carry out statutory reviews of homelessness cases, with due regard to the relevant legislation (eg Housing Act 1996 (as amended), Homelessness Act 2017, Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012, Localism Act 2011 and Equality Act 2010), caselaw and Code of Guidance. To provide written instruction to applicants on the outcome of their review, giving appropriate advice on any subsequent actions they may choose to pursue.

To provide training and support to case officers, using evidence from Reviews to identify training need and service improvement.

To take a 'risk-based' approach when reviewing cases, using sound judgement and a comprehensive knowledge of the relevant legislation. To represent the Council at Court (where required) on decisions made by the Council, pertaining to Housing and Homelessness.

To ensure the service maintains 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.

Job Summary

To carry out statutory reviews of decisions made by the Council pertaining to Housing and Homelessness, having due regard to the relevant legislation and the overall objective to prevent or relieve homelessness. To use sound judgement and understanding of best practice and caselaw, when assessing the risk to the Council when coming to decisions.

The post holder must be engaged in identifying areas for improvement, using evidence drawn from statutory reviews and using this to shape and deliver training, leading to better decision making in future. In doing so, the post holder will input into service design and implement new operating environments to develop the wider Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service.

Key Tasks and Accountabilities

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.

1. To carry out statutory homelessness reviews of decisions made by the Council, with respect to the relevant legislation, caselaw and Codes of Guidance. This will include, but not exclusive to, Housing Act 1996 (as amended), Homelessness Act 2017, Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012, Localism Act 2011 and Equality Act 2010.
2. To ensure the Council delivers an effective, customer-friendly and efficient service, which puts people at its heart. To make support officers in their decision making, using the evidence garnered through Reviews to identify training need and deliver training in order to achieve continuous improvement.
3. To assess the merits of individual cases in respect of threats of Judicial Review and requests for interim accommodation, if available with legal advice, making recommendations to officers and managers as necessary.
4. To maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of the relevant legislation and caselaw, advising on the development and revision of policies and procedures in light of these.
5. To attend High Court and County Court Proceedings, conferences with counsel, and Committee meetings as requesting, assisting with the compilation of reports and written instruction.
6. To ensure that investigations and decisions are completed within statutory time limits, using available systems to monitor progress and compile statistics.
7. To engage with solicitors acting on behalf of those requesting Reviews and appeals, maintaining a professional and customer-friendly approach throughout and acting in the best interests of the local authority.
8. To respond to telephone calls, emails and other communications, including member's enquiries, Ombudsman investigations and Freedom of Information requests.
9. To follow up actions resulting from review decisions, such as cancellation of emergency/temporary accommodation, ensuring that all IT systems are updated with the relevant actions and outcomes.
10. To participate as a duty manager as required ensuring the effective use and promotion of homelessness prevention services, authorising temporary accommodation placements where appropriate, and making sure best practice is adopted.
11. To maintain extensive and specialist knowledge of relevant housing legislation, case law and guidance as well as local and national policies in order to provide expert advice and guidance to staff, colleagues, council members as well as partners and stakeholders.

12. To operate within a robust performance management framework, taking responsibility for actions relating to the post, and achieving outcomes within stated targets. To input into the collation of performance data, in order for this to be fed into reports and briefings as required.
13. To contribute to the day to day management and development of move on, prevention and housing options and coordinate services with health care, young people and prison/probation services to ensure the provision of suitable housing move on solutions for people leaving care or institutions.
14. To help develop a housing options approach to service delivery to customers and partner service providers, using liaison, negotiation and casework skills to assist customers to move into alternative settled accommodation or, where necessary, specialist supported housing.
15. To contribute to the development of proactive housing services for residents affected by the impacts of homelessness, welfare reform and other policy or legislative changes.
16. To ensure the service complies 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.
17. To build and maintain 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.
18. To contribute to a 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.

To undertake all responsibilities listed below:

19. To be a champion for excellent customer service delivery and customer care and contribute to the development and delivery of an integrated service.
20. 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.
21. To partake 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.
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. To take responsibility, appropriate to the post for promoting diversity including tackling racism and good race, ethnic & community relations.
26. 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.

Personal Specification

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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

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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- Essential	Desirable	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
KNOWLEDGE: A comprehensive knowledge of the relevant legislation relating to housing and homelessness, Codes of Guidance and case law as well as related areas such as family law, Immigration/Asylum and eligibility A comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the housing and support needs of homeless and housing applicants and tenants. A full understanding of the housing issues facing a high demand London local authority. A good knowledge of welfare rights law and practice and specific knowledge of welfare reforms		Application, Test and Interview Application and Interview Application and Interview Application

EDUCATION/QUALIFICATIONS Educated to degree level standard or equivalent or demonstrable suitable experience		Application
SKILLS, ABILITIES & EXPERIENCE: Experience of working within a high quality housing service in a related area for a large local authority or comparable organisation. Experience of writing high quality and complex statutory decision letters in relation to homelessness applications Extensive experience of investigation and assessment, and making decisions within the current homelessness legislation Understanding the principles of a prevention and options approach in tackling the issue of homelessness and of coaching and helping staff to use negotiation tools in an advice or advocacy setting. Experience of working within a large, complex, customer-focused organisation with a significant emphasis on performance management. Experience of dealing with complaints and/or Member Enquiries, with demonstrable evidence of using these to enhance service delivery. Experience of writing and presenting clear and concise reports		Application and Interview Application and interview Application and Interview Application and Interview Application and Interview Application, Test and Interview Application
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 quickly, to think creatively about problems and identify solutions.		Application and Interview Application and Interview Application and Interview Application, Test and Interview Application, Test and Interview

<p><u>Coaching and development:</u> Ability to identify people's strengths and weaknesses and create a supportive environment whereby staff are able to fulfil their potential</p>		Application and Interview
<p><u>Calmness under pressure:</u> Ability to thrive in a challenging and pressurised environment, with competing service demands and tight deadlines</p>		Application and Interview
<p><u>Respects and understands individual's needs:</u> Ability to work effectively and even-handedly with people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances, ensuring there are practices in place to reflect this.</p>		Application and Interview
<p>OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Willing to work outside normal working hours to respond to emergencies or attend meetings as required.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>To comply with the Council's Health & Safety Policies.</p>		<p>Application</p> <p>Application</p> <p>Application</p>