

## Wirral Council: Job Role Descriptor

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| <b>Job Role:</b>            | <b>Homeless Prevention and Assessment Officer</b> |
| <b>Service:</b>             | <b>Supported Housing &amp; Homelessness</b>       |
| <b>Reports to:</b>          | <b>Team Leader</b>                                |
| <b>No. of Subordinates:</b> | <b>0</b>  |
| <b>HR USE ONLY</b>          |   |
| <b>Job Role Ref:</b>        | <b>REG</b>  |
| <b>Job Family:</b>          | <b>Regulation</b>                                 |
| <b>Grade:</b>               | <b>Band G</b>                                     |

### JOB ROLE PURPOSE

Deliver a professional Housing Options and Homeless service providing advice, support and guidance to ensure that all clients receive timely interventions and assessments to support them into permanent and settled affordable accommodation.

### KEY TASKS

1. Ensure that housing advice and assistance is given to all clients with due regard to housing legislation (under the 1996 Housing Act, Homelessness Act 2002 & Children's Act 1989) within the agreed timescales ensuring compliance to the requirements of the legislation.
2. Identify problems causing potential homelessness and provide tailored solutions, advice and assistance to facilitate and secure alternative settled accommodation and prevent homeless.
3. Work proactively with relevant Council departments, Floating Support Providers/Partners, Health/Hospital Trust, Private Landlords Family Support Unit, Probation and Registered Providers to ensure that effective support is identified and implemented to prevent homelessness, ensure timely assessments and support clients into settled accommodation.
4. Provide advice and assistance to clients with complex needs and sign post to the relevant services and support
5. Keep up to date with all current housing and benefit's legislation to ensure compliance.
6. Ensure that Families and individuals are placed appropriately in temporary accommodation that fully meet their needs, ensuring that move on plans are in place and that clients do not exceed legal deadlines.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### People

Work with complex and chaotic clients who require assistance to secure safe and affordable accommodation and to work with support agencies to ensure that they maintain their tenancies.

Work with clients to offer advice, assistance and support with mortgage related issues arranging and negotiating repayment plans with financial providers (Bank's/Building Societies).

Negotiate on behalf of the tenant with landlord where there are rent arrears and offer advice to clients on their legal rights.

Work with clients, where possession orders have been issued by the court, to access alternative accommodation.

Liaise with Children's and Young Peoples Department (CYPD) when dealing with homeless families to ensure that all safeguarding issues are addressed and that the families' needs are met.

Undertake direct work with clients via home visits where appropriate, to provide potentially homeless applicants with a full appraisal of their situation identifying and discussing a range of options for them to consider.

Identify the support needs of service users and make appropriate referrals to other Council teams and external agencies.

Assist clients to access and signpost to other statutory, non statutory and voluntary agencies where relevant.

Highlight any concerns about service users where appropriate to the relevant agency (Safeguarding).

Negotiate and facilitate the placement of clients within emergency /short term accommodation

Carry out a full investigation and evaluate the main factors and reasons why a client has been unable or unwilling to maintain their tenancy/mortgage.

Offer budgeting and money management advice to clients who are in rent arrears or who are subject to a reduction in benefits due to welfare reforms.

Provide peer training and support to colleagues to ensure there is a consistent approach to the delivery of service.

Carry out housing surgeries throughout the borough offering advice and assistances to Health and Social Care Services clients.

### **Financial**

Negotiate and process claims for discretionary housing payment (DHP) to assist clients to manage and reduce rent arrears, and to move on to more suitable a sustainable accommodation.

Carryout affordability evaluations of the client's financial ability and negotiate with debtors on payment reduction plans and writing off of debts.

Negotiate, assess and allocate Discretionary Housing Payments and negotiate with creditors to reduce debt or agree and implement payment plans.

Update systems and compile reports detailing financial assistance that has been negotiated and the decisions made.

### **Strategic**

Understand and ensure that services are delivered within the strategic framework of the council.

### **Resources**

Ensure our statutory responsibility and performance targets are met maintaining full and accurate records of all contact on the appropriate IT or manual systems.

Ensure that all client financial and personal data is protected and fully comply with the data protection policy of the council.

### **Planning and Organising**

Prepare court documentation and evidence for housing hearings and appeals.

Organise and prioritise workload and when required complete risk assessments in respect of service users and for communicating these appropriately and confidentially to other staff in the Council or to other agencies.

Ensure manual and computerised records are updated in an accurate and timely manner, and that data relevant to the future development of homelessness prevention and assessment services is recorded and reported in an appropriate format.

Offer support and advice to clients that are subject to court proceedings for repossession of their property or ending of their tenancy. Work with Registered Providers and Private Landlords to secure alternative suitable and affordable accommodation

Plan and detail what support the client will require to sustain their tenancy and then work with the tenancy support officers to ensure that the support is provided.

## Decision Making

Investigate and determine the status of those presenting as homeless and make a decision with all of the relevant data and information available working within the legal framework to ensure that all decisions are in accordance with Homeless Legislation.

Carry out risk assessments and engage with the relevant agencies to formulate a plan of action to address the risks e.g. Safeguarding, Domestic violence and Child protection.

## EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

### Essential Criteria

#### Knowledge & Skills:

- Able to negotiate and work assertively, yet in a sensitive manner, with those who are potentially homeless to ensure that they achieve a realistic understanding of their situation and to discuss the options available to them
- Able to investigate issues in a sensitive manner.
- Able to accurately record statements and findings
- Able to discuss and negotiate effective outcomes options with accommodation providers and landlords to prevent homelessness

#### Experience:

- Substantial experience of interviewing and negotiation skills including direct experience of working to prevent homelessness.
- Experience of homelessness and housing advice work.
- Experience in working with vulnerable client groups (safeguarding)
- Experience of effective interviewing skills

### Desirable Criteria

#### Qualifications:

- Evidence of and commitment to continuous professional development.

#### Knowledge & Skills:

- Knowledge of the social and financial costs of homelessness to individuals, the local authority and other relevant bodies.
- Knowledge of Landlord and Tenant, Immigration, Welfare Benefits and relevant Social Services legislation
- Able to think creatively in finding solutions to preventing homelessness
- Effective communication skills both verbal and written

- Confident user of information technology applications to include database input, word-processing, and email
- Knowledge of welfare reforms and the impact that it has on potential clients
- Basic knowledge of the court processes and procedures around eviction and tenancies.

### **Additional Work Element**

Work with clients that are suffering Domestic Violence.

Working with clients who have serious mental health conditions, drug and alcohol addiction and who are unpredictable and aggressive.

Post holder will participate in the services out of hours on call rota to deal with emergency situations occurring outside normal office hours

Carry out home visits when required.

#### **NOTE:**

**The job role holder may be required to undertake other reasonable duties commensurate with the job role descriptor grade as directed by the Head of Service.**

This job role descriptor will be reviewed regularly and may be subject to amendment or modification at any time after consultation with the post holder. It is not a definitive statement of procedures and tasks, but sets out the main expectations of the Service in relation to the post holder's responsibilities and duties.

Elements of this job role descriptor and changes to it may be amended in light of organisational and service requirements.

**Signed Head of Service**

**Date**

Ian Platt, Head of Housing

11<sup>th</sup> February 2015