

LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

Job Description

POST TITLE: Legal Threshold Officer

DIRECTORATE: Climate, Homes and Economy

SERVICE: Benefits and Homeless Prevention Service

GRADE: PO3

LOCATION: Hackney Service Centre

RESPONSIBLE TO: Team Manager

RESPONSIBLE FOR:

The Legal Threshold Officer will lead on ensuring the Benefits and Homeless Prevention Service robustly applies the required legal tests at all stages of process between approach and main duty decision making for homeless applications.

PURPOSE OF THE JOB:

- To take ownership and lead on all judicial review threats within the Benefits and Homeless Prevention Service, working collaboratively with the Legal Department to provide robust defence via documentation and evidence. Liaising with Legal Services regarding such cases and preparing witness statements as required. Attending court where necessary.
- Responding to Ombudsman enquiries and other forms of scrutiny as appropriate.
- Proactively monitoring cases as they progress ensuring that any increased risk is followed up in a timely manner.
- Utilising knowledge and outcomes to ensure that comprehensive case notes and records that will stand up to legal challenge are made by all staff following all contact with residents, their advocates other professionals working with the resident, including at case closure.
- Embedding culture change throughout the Benefits and Homelessness Prevention Service so the service is making robust, informed decisions that result in those most vulnerable given the highest degree of attention, and those that don't meet the legal thresholds are signposted elsewhere.

- To ensure that the use of the private rented sector in the prevention and relief of homelessness is prioritised applying creative and innovative problem solving to ensure sustainable and affordable housing outcomes for applicants.
- Confidently providing housing advice on a range of topics as well as signposting and referring to other services as required.
- Work alongside the temporary accommodation team and the income collection team to ensure best value decisions are made and risk minimised.
- Advising residents around their housing options and providing holistic support through the process including applications to housing schemes, sourcing accommodation in the private rented sector and out of London rehousing opportunities.
- Working with the Learning and development Team and external training providers to ensure that the knowledge and skills held and utilised by case workers is sector leading.
- Working in partnership with the range of other services supporting the resident including other housing teams, internal departments and external agencies such as police, health and social care.
- To work collaboratively with the Pathway Development Manager, Team Managers and Strategic Leads to reduce temporary accommodation spend via staff development, decision making, quality checking, reflection forums, learning and development programmes and service re-design.
- To work in a strength-based, anti-racist and trauma informed way at all times.
- To develop and maintain a good working knowledge of the Benefits and Homelessness Prevention Service.
- Ensure that resident voices are heard and built into the way that cases are managed and developed, through co-production and co-design principles.
- Contribute to delivery and monitoring of a set of challenging KPIs, measuring the effectiveness and continuous improvement of the service.
- Contribute to specific projects for the Benefits and Homeless Prevention Service which will enable residents to thrive and live well.
- Develop innovative responses to changing circumstances and problem solve with a high degree of responsibility and independence.
- Contribute to information management systems and analyse data to identify priorities, make decisions and review progress.
- To take responsibility for data collection, inputting and validation, ensuring systems are accurate, complete and up to date.
- To make decisions on a frequent basis on behalf of the service – e.g. case decisions using professional judgement and anticipating impact on the council and

wider multi agency stakeholder group, decisions regarding legal action and risk to service users, decisions relating to multi-agency working and safeguarding

OTHER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Optimise service delivery through flexible working, co-location and integration with the wider services within Benefits and Homeless Prevention and Housing Services.
- Adhere to Hackney Council Policies and Procedures at all times.
- Cover for team members as necessary.
- To be proactive in reviewing and evaluating own performance and identifying and acting upon areas for improvement and development.
- Undertaking, as required, any other duties compatible with the level and nature of the post and/or reasonably required by more senior members of staff.
- Attend and participate in divisional and team meetings and other meetings as required.
- This post is a hybrid role and is required to carry out home visits to residents located outside of Hackney and London.

NB: All employees are expected to adhere to the Council's Diversity & Equality and Health and Safety Policies.

Person Specification

Experience / Skills / Knowledge / Ability

- Expert level knowledge of Homelessness Reduction Act, Housing Act and other relevant legislation
- Ability to utilise practical application of legislation to defend Council decision making
- Ability to write witness statements on behalf of the Council.
- Ability to coach staff to deliver desired, improved outcomes utilising excellent communication skills adopting a non- hierarchical manner and no blame culture
- Proven experience of delivering services in homelessness or temporary accommodation.
- Experience of working with people who have experienced crisis or disadvantages including poor health and wellbeing, domestic abuse, crime / antisocial behaviour and trauma and their advocates, and an understanding of how these disadvantages combine to create social exclusion.
- Excellent customer service skills, with a strong commitment to empowering people to solve their problems, thrive and live well.
- An excellent understanding of the methods used to scrutinise Council's decisions in particular Judicial Reviews and the role of the Ombudsman.
- An excellent knowledge of the network of statutory and non-statutory social and community services and how these may be utilised to support and empower vulnerable people.
- Great written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to build strong relationships with a variety of internal and external stakeholders including landlords / agents and achieve results through collaboration.
- Able to undertake risk assessments, develop safety plans and make recommendations about risk and need based on the evidence.
- Ability to conduct quality checks as part of contract management and monitoring with providers and staff.
- Able to manage and prioritise a complex workload balancing organisational and service led demands, working under pressure and to deadlines. Able to work independently and comfortably as a lone worker to support clients and staff to effectively manage a caseload.

- Able to undertake co-production, service development and project work across the multi agency partnership at an appropriate level.
- Good administrative and IT skills and the ability to use electronic systems to input and retain accurate records
- Comfortable with change, welcoming it as an opportunity to grow.
- Flexible approach and commitment to achieving results, with excellent team working skills.

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