



Role Profile

Job Title: Senior Caseworker and Reviews Officer

Post Number: 216921

Grade: PO3

Directorate: Housing Planning and Economic Regeneration

Service: Homelessness, Independence and Preventative Services

Reports to: Housing Reviews Manager

PURPOSE OF ROLE:

- To be responsible for the statutory independent reviews function following homelessness decisions and housing allocations, ensuring that decisions are consistent with the council's legal responsibilities.
- To implement the statutory reviews provisions of homelessness and allocations legislation, taking account of relevant Codes of Guidance, case law and policy. The post holder will require comprehensive and expert knowledge of housing functions and related law and statutory guidance, sufficient to handle legal challenges.
- To carry out thorough enquiries and investigations of complaints, reviews and legal challenges under Parts 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), ensuring that decisions made are fully compliant with relevant legislation, up to date case law and policy, and are issued within targets and statutory timeframes.
- To support the service on a full range of statutory housing compliance responsibilities relating to strategy, tenure blind tenancy placements and policy and procedures across housing.
- To contribute to service improvements by dealing effectively with enquiries, complaints and reviews, adopting a customer friendly, problem-solving approach to prevent further escalation and resolve at the earliest point of contact.
- To be proactive and constructive member of the Service.
- The postholder will have a focus on performance and is responsible for sharing learning and best practice in relation to decision making, and new legislative requirements, across the Housing Service.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

1. To work across teams and departments and with relevant agencies and stakeholders to ensure services are integrated at the point of delivery, identify new opportunities for business improvement and efficiencies and provide better outcomes for service users. To represent the service at multi-agency meetings and carry out project work as required to progress new initiatives, including ICT developments.
2. To provide an accessible service, interview applicants and carry out home visits as part of customer enquiries, complaints and statutory reviews. This may involve visiting accommodation outside the Hounslow borough.
3. To be responsible for managing a caseload and conducting statutory reviews in relation to any decisions reached on homelessness duties that are subject to a statutory review process and decisions reached regarding housing allocations that require an independent review to be carried out.
4. In conjunction with the relevant Head of Service, make decisions on the Local Authority's discretion to provide, extend or cancel interim accommodation pending a homelessness review or appeal decision when such a request is made. This includes the writing of Mohammed case-law letters to advocates and solicitors - or responding to Mohammed case-law letters.
5. Respond to any legal challenges, including threats of Judicial Review, relating to duties owed and/or decisions made in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). In conjunction with the Head of Service, instruct the Council's Legal Services regarding legal challenges against the Council.
6. Act as a critical friend and independent arbitrator in escalation cases where service managers and customers are unable to reach a compromise to their mutual satisfaction, in cases of service complaints. This includes co-ordinating Housing Services responses to the Ombudsman, ensuring that Ombudsman recommendations are implemented and preparing reports that detail the facts of cases, advising on suitable compensation levels in line with Council policy.
7. To provide professional advice to Councillors and other officers on relevant areas of service delivery, ensuring compliance with the Council's standing orders. To provide effective responses to complaints and enquiries from customers, Councillors and MPs, taking steps to resolve service issues at the earliest opportunity.
8. Work collaboratively with Service Managers and Heads of Service to ensure that the Service is successfully co-ordinated, ensuring policies and robust procedures are in place, kept up to date and are compliant with current regulatory requirements and legislation (including case law), to deliver efficient joined-up services that prevent homelessness and meet the housing needs of homeless households. To support

Service Managers and Head of Service to implement service changes and improvements.

9. Co-ordinate responses to relevant Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests as required.
10. Provide expert advice on homelessness cases, maintaining expert knowledge of housing case law, housing legislation and other relevant legislation.
11. Contribute, support and respond to complaints for HIPS.
12. Make efficient and effective use of ICT, ensuring that appropriate management information is provided and made accessible to senior management, submitting periodic performance returns as required. To adhere to Data Protection requirements at all times when collecting, recording and handling personal data.
13. To attend internal and external meetings as required and represent the Council at local and national level, attending and presenting at conferences, seminars and working parties.
14. To cover for other officers across the service and participate in out of hours duties as required; understand that job descriptions are fluid and subject to regular updates to reflect the needs of the service, residents and wider Council priorities; undertake other duties that are commensurate with the grade of this post as required.

These are the values that drive us and will you:

Lead with heart

We're here for the people of Hounslow. We work together with them and for them with care and compassion, with patience and in partnership. We put ourselves in other's shoes, remembering that every person is different, and every interaction is a real moment in their lives. We always feel first.

Do new

We need to do things differently if we're going to help Hounslow people thrive in the future. Hard work is important but it's not enough on its own. We need to challenge ourselves to break new ground, invent new approaches, try new ideas keep moving forward and keep improving. That means being ready to stop doing things we've done before. It means taking on risk and backing each other when we take a leap.

Pass on the power

The world keeps on changing and we need to change with it. We won't be able to adapt fast enough to the future needs of our residents if we stick to old fashioned command and control. We need to hand over responsibility and give people more power to make

decisions and take action themselves. It's about being transparent and straightforward. It's about providing tools and support. But most of all, it's about being ready to trust each other to do the right thing.

Harness the mix

We work together, across disciplines and roles. We talk lots, share our insights, our skills and experience. We're not interested in siloes or defensiveness. We're always open to different approaches, we're flexible and ready to adapt. We break down the barriers between our parts and people to unlock the problem-solving power of our amazing mix of minds.

Be a rock

There's lots to do and people need us. It's up to us to take the initiative. To take responsibility. To stand up and be counted. Everyday. It's about being super focused, effective and efficient. It's about allocating our resources smartly and with good rationale – using data to help guide our decisions. But most of all, it's about having the strength and determination to keep on going through thick and thin.

These are the top things about you that are most important

- Extensive experience in dealing with statutory decisions, and expert knowledge of housing case law, homelessness legislation, private sector tenancy law and good practice, including:
 - a. The Housing Act 1996, including amendments made by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2012 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
 - b.
 - c. Landlord and Tenant Law, for example, the Housing Act 1985 and the Prevention from Eviction Act 1977.
 - d.
 - e. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and DWP guidance on personal benefits and housing related benefits.
 - f.
 - g. Statutory requirements in relation to allocations on social housing and Local Authority Allocations Policies.
- An expert working knowledge and understanding of current housing law, such as the Housing Act 1996, Parts VI and VII, Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2012, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and immigration law as it applies to housing eligibility, relevant code of guidance and case law.
- Working knowledge of legislation associated with homelessness investigations and housing allocations, including, Family Law Act 1996, Children Acts 1989 and 2004,

Human Rights Act 1998, Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, Community Care Act 2000 and the Care Act 2014.

- Considerable experience of homelessness case management in a local authority or advice agency setting.
- Experience of effective complaint handling and delivering good customer service, delivering advice and guidance to customers and training to colleagues.
- You have experience of successfully managing staff and are a collaborative leader, acting with integrity and building trusting relationships, operating effectively through prioritisation, delegation and efficient use of available resources to deliver value for money services.
- You are an expert communicator who engages effectively with a broad range of people, including applicants, colleagues, and elected members, to motivate, influence, negotiate and persuade and achieve multi-disciplinary outcomes to meet wide ranging needs.

Qualifications:

1. You have a degree or equivalent qualification (law degree desirable).
2. You have demonstrable work experience and can evidence continual professional development.
3. A basic DBS check is required.