

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: ACCOMMODATION OFFICER

Post Number: DV0719

Service: Environmental Health and Housing Services

Reports to: Housing Needs and Strategy Manager

Grade: Scale 4-6

General Description of Duties

The postholder will undertake a range of duties in connection with securing suitable accommodation to those in housing need through maximising nominations to housing associations and utilising letting opportunities in the private and voluntary sectors.

Key Functions

1. Responsible for all RSL nominations, including temporary accommodation, and selecting applicants from housing register in accordance with part VI Housing Act 1996 and TMBC Housing Allocations Scheme
2. Support the work of the Housing Options Officers by providing a range of accommodation options for clients in housing need including private and voluntary sectors.
3. Manage emergency accommodation placements and check-in arrangements, including arranging a suitable placement, setting up clients' service charges, housing benefit applications, monitoring of rent accounts and debt recovery.
4. Administer the use of 'qualifying offers' to discharge duty to households owed a duty under the homeless legislation, utilising the Council's rent deposit and bond schemes.
5. Consider reasons for refusal of accommodation and where appropriate refer the suspension of applicants from the housing register to the Senior Housing Options Officer.

General Functions

1. To support the work of the Housing Options and Housing Register teams in preventing and tackling homelessness by:
 - Providing practical help in preventing homelessness or securing alternative suitable accommodation;

- Carrying out accommodation searches on behalf of team members to identify accommodation solutions
 - Carrying out home visits to verify applicant's circumstances prior to making a nomination or as required
 - Maximising the use of the Council's rent deposit scheme;
 - Ensuring referrals are made to relevant agencies and initiatives as required to provide longer term support, e.g. floating support, sanctuary scheme, social services, debt advice.
 - Providing advice on local and national housing options and resources, including forthcoming vacancies in RSL stock accessible via the Council's housing register and private sector vacancies through links with private landlords;
 - Making benefit calculations to maximise income and ensure affordability of accommodation;
 - Carrying out home visits in order to prevent homelessness as a result of parent/relative/friend exclusion and landlord eviction;
 - Assisting with tenancy set-up including pre-tenancy determinations, housing benefit applications and liaising with private landlords and letting agents;
 - Offering advice and tenancy support to landlords and clients to resolve tenancy problems including setting up and terminating a tenancy eg tenancy agreements, utilities, safety requirements, repairing obligations, period of notice, possession proceedings etc
 - Managing expectations by providing realistic advice relating to the supply of and demand for social housing, waiting times and the operation of the housing register.
2. Ensure minimal use is made of B&B through effective use of RSL nominations and alternative solutions such as private rented accommodation. Manage B&B allocations made under the homeless legislation including making bookings, setting up a rent account and completing paperwork with the client. Manage emergency accommodation placements and check-in arrangements, including arranging a suitable placement, setting up clients' service charges, housing benefit applications, monitoring of rent accounts and debt recovery.
 3. Develop and maintain links with private landlords and letting agents in order to maximise availability of privately rented accommodation. To provide a link for private landlords to report a problem with a tenant where homelessness may result, so that prevention work can be targeted through Housing Options team.
 4. To explore and facilitate accommodation solutions for clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness across all sectors.
 5. Attendance at external multi-agency meetings as required.

6. To assist the Senior Housing Options Officer where a duty may be owed under the homelessness legislation.
7. To give talks/presentations to relevant agencies to help prevent homelessness and to secure new accommodation solutions as appropriate.
8. To maintain accurate and detailed records on each client and contribute to the Council's targets for reducing homelessness (BV213), and reducing the use of temporary accommodation.
9. To contribute to and to maintain comprehensive advice/options information packs for the public.
10. To assist in the compilation of statistical returns and written monitoring reports for the Service as required.
11. To carry out any other duties appropriate to the post which may be requested from time to time, including participating in the Council's out of hours service as required.

Job descriptions are working documents and are not intended to specifically exclude any task which the postholder might reasonably be expected to undertake.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: HOUSING OPTIONS OFFICER

Post Numbers: DV0710, DV0714 and DV0717

Service: Environmental Health and Housing Services

Reports to: Housing Needs and Strategy Manager

Grade: Scale 4-6

General Description of Duties

The postholder will provide comprehensive housing options advice and will undertake related duties aimed at preventing and resolving homelessness.

Key Functions

1. To provide comprehensive housing options/ homeless prevention advice to clients face to face/over the telephone/through written correspondence and by email as appropriate.
2. To provide housing advice for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and provide appropriate advice and support to assist and motivate clients in resolving their housing needs.
3. To operate Housing Advice and Options surgeries from Tonbridge Castle or other locations in the borough, as directed.
4. Responsible for providing and updating comprehensive housing advice and options information packs for the public
5. To support the Senior Housing Options Officer in conducting homeless assessments as required.

General Functions

6. To support the work of the team in preventing homelessness by:
 - Providing practical help in preventing homelessness or securing alternative suitable accommodation;
 - Carrying out accommodation searches on behalf of team members to identify accommodation solutions;
 - Making benefit calculations to maximise income and ensure affordability of accommodation;

- Carrying out home visits in order to prevent homelessness as a result of parent/relative/friend exclusion and landlord eviction;
 - Carrying out visits to all landlords and tenants where the landlord has served, or is about to serve NTQ, where homelessness may be prevented (e.g. HB issue, tenancy breach) to negotiate for tenancy reinstatement.
 - Assisting with tenancy set-up including pre-tenancy determinations, housing benefit applications and liaising with private landlords and letting agents;
 - Liaising with relevant agencies (social services, health, probation, landlords etc) to prevent homelessness and ensure that support is in place;
 - Ensuring referrals are made to relevant agencies to provide longer term support, e.g. floating support, social services;
 - Maximising the use of the Council's rent deposit scheme;
 - Referring clients to other relevant services and initiatives as required, e.g. floating support, Sanctuary scheme, debt advice;
 - Managing expectations by providing realistic advice relating to the supply of and demand for social housing, waiting times and the operation of the housing register.
7. Assist with regular workshops and give presentations in schools to raise awareness of homelessness amongst young people.
 8. To give talks / presentations to relevant agencies to help prevent homelessness and to secure new accommodation solutions as appropriate.
 9. To maintain accurate and detailed records on each client and contribute to the Council's targets for reducing homelessness (BV213), and reducing the use of temporary accommodation.
 10. To assist in the compilation of statistical returns and written monitoring reports for the Service as required.
 11. Attendance at external multi-agency meetings as required.
 12. To carry out any other duties appropriate to the post which may be requested from time to time including participating in the Council's out of hours service as required.

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JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: HOUSING REGISTER ASSISTANT

Post Numbers: DV0720 and DV0721

Service: Environmental Health and Housing Services

Reports to: Housing Needs and Strategy Manager

Grade: Scale 1-2

General Description of Duties

The postholder will undertake a range of duties related to managing the Council's housing register and supporting the Housing Needs team.

Key Functions

1. Distributing and receiving housing register assessment forms and medical/welfare assessment forms.
2. Complete initial assessment of applications, input client details on to the housing register IT system and send acknowledgment letters confirming points awarded and areas of choice. Maintain client files, including confidential destruction of withdrawn applications and closed cases.
3. Refer medical/welfare assessment cases to the medical adviser and/or medical/welfare panel as appropriate.
4. Refer housing conditions cases to the Private Sector Housing team as appropriate
5. Refer potentially ineligible cases to the Senior Housing Options Officer for consideration.
6. Dealing with day to day applicant enquiries including telephone, email, written, or face to face contact providing first point of call for housing options service.
7. Distributing and receiving changes of circumstances information, including updating applicants details on the housing register where changes of circumstances occur.
8. Conducting home visits to vulnerable clients as required, assisting with completion of housing register application forms and/or medical/welfare assessment forms.

9. Carry out annual reviews of housing register applicants, involving mailshots to all applicants, inputting change of circumstances details and cleansing the system of those who no longer wish to be registered.

General Functions

10. To support the work of the Housing Options team in preventing homelessness by:
 - Providing practical help in preventing homelessness or securing alternative suitable accommodation;
 - Carrying out accommodation searches on behalf of team members to identify accommodation solutions;
 - Referring clients to other relevant services and initiatives as required, e.g. floating support, Sanctuary scheme, debt advice.
 - Managing expectations by providing realistic advice relating to the supply of and demand for social housing, waiting times and the operation of the housing register
11. Contribute to comprehensive housing advice and housing register information packs which can be provided to clients.
12. Assist in the compilation of statistical returns and written monitoring reports for the Service when required.
13. Carry out any other duties appropriate to the post which may be requested from time to time.

Job descriptions are working documents and are not intended to specifically exclude any task which the postholder might reasonably be expected to undertake.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: SENIOR HOUSING OPTIONS OFFICER

Post Number: DV0718

Service: Environmental Health and Housing Services

Reports to: Housing Needs and Strategy Manager

Grade: SO

General Description of Duties

The postholder will oversee the delivery of a range of services to those who are threatened with or actually homeless, including providing comprehensive homeless prevention advice, undertaking homelessness assessments; securing temporary and permanent accommodation; researching housing needs and new initiatives; and providing technical advice and support to the Housing Options Officers.

Key Functions

13. To provide operational advice, support and guidance to the Housing Options Officers in carrying out their responsibilities and to provide professional advice and guidance on homelessness law where appropriate.
14. To ensure the effective use of housing advice surgeries at Tonbridge Castle or other locations in the borough as directed.
15. To take homeless applications as and when necessary, make appropriate investigations and enquiries and reach decisions in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 part VII (as amended).
16. To determine where homelessness cannot be prevented and whether an interim duty to accommodate exists, and liaise with the Accommodation Officer to secure emergency accommodation.
17. To monitor the provision and use of temporary accommodation, and assist in achieving the Council's temporary accommodation reduction target for 2010.
18. To prepare reports and briefing notes on a range of housing issues, as requested including assistance with preparing reports for Members on homelessness and housing advice-related issues.
19. Assist Housing Needs and Strategy Manager in carrying out homeless reviews as required.

20. To consider housing register applicants who may be ineligible and issue decision letters on eligibility and removal of reasonable preference.
21. To consider the suspension of housing register applicants, and issue decision letters following the refusal of a final offer.

General Functions

22. To support the work of the Housing Options team in preventing and tackling homelessness by:
 - Providing practical help in preventing homelessness or securing alternative suitable accommodation;
 - Carrying out accommodation searches on behalf of team members to identify accommodation solutions;
 - Making benefit calculations to maximise income and ensure affordability of accommodation;
 - Carrying out home visits in order to prevent homelessness as a result of parent/relative/friend exclusion and landlord eviction;
 - Assisting with tenancy set-up including pre-tenancy determinations, housing benefit applications and liaising with private landlords and letting agents;
 - Liaising with relevant agencies (social services, health, probation, landlords etc) to prevent homelessness and ensure that support is in place;
 - Ensuring referrals are made to relevant agencies to provide longer term support, e.g. floating support, social services;
 - Maximising the use of the Council's rent deposit scheme;
 - Referring clients to other relevant services and initiatives as required, e.g. floating support, Sanctuary scheme, debt advice;
 - Managing expectations by providing realistic advice relating to the supply of and demand for social housing, waiting times and the operation of the housing register.
23. To ensure comprehensive housing advice information is produced and made widely available to the public and clients.
24. Liaise with other agencies to raise the profile of housing advice surgeries and undertake advertising and promotion of the service on an ongoing basis.
25. To oversee and monitor the Council's rent deposit scheme including recovery of former debts.
26. To give talks / presentations to relevant agencies to raise the profile of the service across sectors.

27. To give workshops/presentations in schools to raise awareness of homelessness amongst young people.
28. To ensure accurate and detailed records are maintained on each client and contribute to the Council's target for reducing homelessness (BV213).
29. To oversee the compilation of statistical returns and written monitoring reports for the Service as required, including P1E and HSSA returns BVPI's and LPI's.
30. To co-ordinate the Council's Joint Assessment Referral Procedure (JARP) and represent the Council at JARP meetings.
31. To promote and develop initiatives for the prevention of homelessness in accordance with legislation, government guidance and good practice.
32. To support the Housing Needs and Strategy Manager in delivery of the West Kent Homelessness Strategy.
33. To provide support and assistance to the Housing Needs and Strategy Manager as required.
34. To attend meetings and represent the Council on internal and external liaison groups as directed.
35. To participate in the Council's out of hours service to provide support to staff and advice to customers presenting as homeless outside normal working hours.

To carry out any other duties appropriate to the post which may be requested from time to time. Job descriptions are working documents and are not intended to specifically exclude any task which the postholder might reasonably be expected to undertake.