

## Harlow Council Job Description

**Job Title:** Housing Options and Advice Officer **Post Number:** SH0222X

**Grade:** 11 **Date:** February 2021

**Service:** Housing

**Location:** Civic Centre

**Responsible to:** Housing Options and Advice Team Leader

### Job Purpose:

The Council is committed to providing its customers with the highest level of customer care in the delivery of a customer focused, high quality Housing Service.

The post holder will be responsible for the prevention of homelessness through timely and appropriate intervention. You will be responsible for offering advice and assistance on a range of housing options to customers to help them to maintain or secure accommodation in sectors other than local authority.

The post holder will also be responsible for investigating and assessing homeless applications made to the Council. The Council is committed to a policy of, wherever possible, preventing homelessness through the provision of advice, practical assistance and through the provision of a range of alternative options.

Where no suitable options are available and homeless applications have been made the post holder will have to manage a caseload of homeless assessments. Where necessary this may include the placement of homeless applicants in temporary accommodation.

Where an applicant is placed in either Council owned or externally provided temporary accommodation you will be expected to monitor their progress and assist them to secure permanent accommodation.

- 1.0** Through the use of advice, guidance and a range of options the major focus of work will be the prevention of homelessness.
- 2.0** You will conduct casework with the aim of preventing homelessness.
- 3.0** You will answer enquiries from the general public and advise on housing related problems.
- 4.0** You will assess, administer and process homeless applications.
- 5.0** You will be required to work with other Council departments and external agencies in order to ensure that high standards of service are delivered.
- 6.0** Other duties appropriate to the role.
- 7.0** Statement of Health and Safety.

## **Breakdown of tasks:**

### **1.0 Through the use of advice, guidance and a range of options the major focus of work will be the prevention of homelessness.**

- 1.1 You will provide a comprehensive housing advice service on all housing and related issues including:
  - a) Tenancy Rights in both private and social accommodation
  - b) Housing related debts
  - c) Maximisation of benefits and tax credits
  - d) Matrimonial rights in respect of housing
  - e) Basic debt counselling
  - f) Advocacy
  - g) Homelessness rights
  - h) Advice and assistance to bid for properties through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- 1.2 You will present all housing options available to customers and administer any Council initiatives such as Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.
- 1.3 You will provide advice and assistance in relation to finding and maintaining accommodation in both the private and social sector.
- 1.4 You will identify potential homeless applicants and prevent homelessness wherever possible by:
  - a) Liaison and mediation with landlords/mortgage lenders
  - b) Referral of suitable applicants and their family, relatives or friends where potential or actual homelessness is caused by a relationship breakdown for mediation services.
- 1.5 You will explore alternative housing options with applicants.
- 1.6 You will assist appropriate customers in a planned move through the Joint Assessment Panel.
- 1.7 You will assist in co-ordinating and providing an office hours and out of hours homelessness service for homeless applicants.
- 1.8 You will ensure that timely, comprehensive and accurate notes are kept and updated as appropriate on Orchard Housing Management System.

### **2.0 You will conduct casework with the aim of preventing homelessness**

- 2.1 You will identify potential homeless applicants.
- 2.2 You will negotiate with applicants, landlords, family or friends in order to prevent homelessness or a crisis situation.
- 2.3 You will present alternative housing options and refer customers to other relevant agencies in order to prevent homelessness.

### **3.0 You will answer enquiries from the general public and advise on housing related problems**

- 3.1 You will answer direct queries from the general public or through the Council's computer systems.
- 3.2 Where appropriate you will assist in dealing with all customer and Member complaints within the Council's published timescales.
- 3.3 You will assist with all customer service issues related to the Housing Advice and Options Service. You will work to ensure that high levels of customer service are delivered.

**4.0 You will assess, administer and process homeless applications**

- 4.1 You will investigate, assess and determine applications from people presenting as homeless.
- 4.2 You will provide advice to customers on the homelessness review process.
- 4.3 You will refer homeless applicants for appropriate temporary accommodation.
- 4.4 You will assist in the management and monitoring of cases in temporary accommodation managed by the Council or external partners.
- 4.5 You will assist customers in securing permanent accommodation in accordance with legislation and Council policy.
- 4.6 You will help homeless applicants by obtaining appropriate support services in order to maintain their temporary or permanent accommodation.

**5.0 You will be required to work with other Council departments and external agencies in order to ensure that high standards of service are delivered.**

- 5.1 You will work closely in partnership with the wider Housing service, other Council departments and where relevant with other external agencies to ensure that appropriate services are delivered.
- 5.2 You will liaise with partner agencies and internal and external agencies as necessary to ensure that appropriate advice is given to applicants.
- 5.3 You will, when appropriate, attend; case conferences, harassment and housing welfare panels and other inter agency meetings.
- 5.4 You will transfer records and liaise with the relevant Housing Officer (Area Management Team) once a permanent offer of accommodation accepted.

**6.0 Other duties appropriate to the role.**

- 6.1 You will ensure confidentiality at all times in all matters relating to any work or communication within the Housing Service.
- 6.2 You will assist in the production of information material on various subject matters relating to housing issues.
- 6.3 You may on occasion give presentations to schools and other groups of people on homelessness prevention and raise awareness of the Council's Housing Options and Advice Service.
- 6.4 You will maintain, monitor and be accountable for the accuracy and timely production of all relevant records, statistics and performance indicators in respect of the Housing Options and Advice Service.
- 6.5 You will undertake training and development as necessary having regard to the needs and requirements of the Service and Team.
- 6.6 To undertake other duties commensurate with the grade, skills, knowledge and experience of the post holder.
- 6.7 All employees are expected to show a commitment to safeguarding children, young people and adults with care and support needs.
- 6.8 All employees are expected to have regard and operate within the Council's commitment to equality and diversity and customer care.
- 6.9 All employees are expected to adhere to requirements of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and The Data Protection Act (2018) and comply with measures to protect the confidentiality of information in accordance with Council policies and procedures.
- 6.10 All employees are expected to familiarise themselves with and adhere to all relevant Council Policies and Procedures.

## **7.0 Statement of Health and Safety**

**7.1** Harlow Council is committed to the provision of high quality health and safety standards. In order to achieve this all staff employed by the Council have the following specific responsibilities, which are consistent with the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:

- 7.2**
- To take reasonable care for the health and safety of yourself and of other persons who may be affected by what you do or fail to do
  - To co-operate with Harlow Council in order to enable statutory requirements to be implemented
  - Not to intentionally interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety.