

Lancaster City Council - Job Description & Person Specification

Job Title:	Housing Options Advisor	Grade:	Grade 8	Job Code:	LCC
Service/Team:	Housing and Property Services	Role Type: *Delete as appropriate	HYBRID / Temporary Contract Fixed for 3 years	Reports to:	Assistant Housing Options Manager
Line Manager:	Assistant Housing Options Manager				

Job Overview

To work as part of a team delivering a comprehensive frontline Housing Options Service providing professional bespoke housing advice and assistance to anyone with a housing related problem. To provide housing advice and to prevent homelessness through interventions. To accept, investigate and determine homelessness applications in line with current legislation. To ensure the service provided meets the statutory obligations of the authority. To manage and deliver a personal caseload carry out detailed enquiries and where necessary make statutory homelessness decisions to discharge the local authority's homelessness duties.

Direct Responsibilities

The main duties and responsibilities are:

1. To provide robust professional bespoke housing advice and assistance in line with current legislation and Council policies to anyone with a housing need.
2. To assess and provide advice and assistance to applicants and others with a view to preventing or resolving homelessness, by negotiation with the applicant's family landlord solicitor financial institutions and other housing providers and other action as appropriate, including the statutory assessment of homeless cases, made under the provisions of the 1996 Housing Act as amended.
3. Complete housing needs assessments and personalised housing plans for every client on the caseload within timescales set and to a standard that meets the requirements of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.
4. To ensure that individual applicants are kept fully informed of progress with enquiries into their applications of the duties upon then in making their application and of information required of them to assist the Council in resolving their application. To take particular care in fulfilling this function where the applicant is disadvantaged through medical or mental health, literacy, being reliant on interpreting/translation services or for other reasons
5. To carry out joint assessments for homeless 16/17 year olds with colleagues from Children's Social Care to establish duties owed under the Children's Act and Homelessness Acts and agree mutual support plans.
6. To accept, investigate and determine homeless application and issue sound written decisions
7. To conduct income maximisation benefit checks and basic debt assessments for those in financial hardship and advice on appropriate financial solutions.
8. To participate in the duty rota and triage
9. To report issues relating to child protection including making section 47 referrals, adult safeguarding and domestic abuse to the appropriate agency and maintain an active involvement to ensure their housing needs are met.
10. Construct accurate case notes to record all activity and maintain up to date case files on Locata/H-Click.
11. Adopt a holistic approach to housing options by working with other colleagues or as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

Lancaster City Council - Job Description & Person Specification

12. To refer customers to specialist agencies and departments for assistance where appropriate.
13. To undertake casework, including interviews and investigations
14. Develop working relationships and protocols with external agencies and internal Council departments, agencies including Social Services, Probation services, Police and local housing providers to enable customers to maintain their housing and to refer to these agencies where appropriate
15. To conduct interviews with applicants under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act as amended, and to undertake a full range investigation of both housing advice and homeless approaches, in accordance with statutory legislation, guidance and good practice To refer customers, to whom the Authority has no statutory duty, to other agencies for accommodation in accordance with policies and procedures, such as direct access hostels and make clients aware of any relocation opportunities
16. To assist with the compilation and collation of management and performance information. To have a good working knowledge of IT systems in relation to applications allocation and homelessness.
17. To keep up to date with housing and other related legislation, including homelessness, allocations, landlord and tenant legislation, benefits and welfare rights, immigration and asylum, matrimonial and family law, and other matters of a similar nature
18. Receive and make timely and accurate records of information, enquiries and requests for assistance made by telephone, letter, email in person and offer high standards of customer service.
19. To communicate, relate and work well with the public, colleagues, Members and staff exercising sensitivity, tact, diplomacy and assertiveness. To maintain at all times strict confidentiality of personal and sensitive information.
20. To alert the line manager and appropriate colleagues to information received that needs immediate attention or that a safeguarding or other attention by the service appears to be warranted.
21. To participate in the out of hours duty rota

Primary Measurable Objectives

1. To provide housing options advice to members of the public following an assessment and carry out casework, with the primary aim of preventing homelessness.
2. To make determinations on homeless cases in accordance with Housing Act 1996 part VII (as amended) and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
3. To prevent homelessness by assisting customers retain their present accommodation and ensuring access to suitable affordable housing for those in need.
4. Provide excellent efficient customer service, on making a positive difference for our communities and on promoting public reassurance.
5. Assist in wider service development and continuous improvement.
6. Deliver timely, efficient and effective housing advice to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

Staff Management Responsibilities

- None

Lancaster City Council - Job Description & Person Specification

Person Specification			
Knowledge & Educational Requirements	Essential Criteria	Desirable Criteria	Assessed by: App Form, Interview, Certificate, Test, Other...
Specialised Qualifications & Training	Possession of a relevant subject at degree level or equivalent professional experience in a housing context Hold a minimum of 5 GCSE's grade A-C (or other Level 2 NVQ qualification)	Housing qualifications awarded by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) qualifications	App Form, Certificate
Experience	Experience of working within a local authority, housing association or homeless voluntary organisation. Experience of working in an advisory / support role or customer focussed environment Experience of managing a caseload	Experience of working effectively in partnership with a range of stakeholders Experience in delivering housing advice and support services	App Form, Interview,
Job Related Skills, Knowledge & Abilities	A good understanding and knowledge of the main causes of homelessness and rough sleeping, and the barriers that people face when trying to access accommodation and support services Awareness and understanding of safeguarding practises and procedures Knowledge of homelessness legislation, guidance and caselaw.	Understanding of welfare benefits and financial inclusion support Knowledge and understanding of housing allocations policies Awareness and understanding of safeguarding practises and procedures	App Form, Interview,
Personal Attributes Including Interpersonal & Communication Skills	Ability to manage a varied, complex caseload and work under pressure to meet deadlines.	The ability to work with vulnerable people in difficult situations and handle challenging behaviour	App Form, Interview

Lancaster City Council - Job Description & Person Specification

	Strong communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to engage effectively with diverse client groups. Problem-solving and negotiation skills, with the ability to develop practical and creative housing solutions. Able to produce accurate, up-to-date, concise case notes related to complex case work. Proficiency in IT systems, including housing management software and Microsoft Office. Ability to develop effective working relationships, and work collaboratively and proactively with key partners, landlords and other stakeholders	This role is public facing therefore the ability to converse at ease with members of the public and provide advice in accurate spoken and written communication is essential.	
Special Requirements/Other	The hours of work are 37 hours 9am-5pm per week, working Monday to Friday with occasional hours that fall outside of this to meet the requirements of the service. Staff cover is required each working day during office hours, and availability for ad-hoc operational requirements for evening meetings/forums. The post is based at Lancaster Town Hall but may travel between council and partner organisation offices.		App Form, Interview

Lancaster City Council - Job Description & Person Specification

Additional information

Lancaster City Council Specific Knowledge

Once in post, demonstrate:

Understanding, implementation and adherence to Lancaster City Council's policies and procedures.

Understanding, implementation and adherence to Our Values.

Understanding of the post holder's own and their team's contribution to the Council's Corporate Plan.

General Statement

The above duties and responsibilities do not include or define all tasks that may be required of you. Duties and responsibilities may vary without changing the general character or grade of the role.

As a normal part of your job, you are expected to routinely undertake corporate activities on behalf of your Directorate, appropriate to grade of the role.

Learning and Development

You are expected to undertake any training and development appropriate to the current and future needs of the post.

Health & Safety at Work

All members of staff are responsible for fulfilling their health and safety roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the Job Description above. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with the Council's health and safety policy, procedures, work instructions and relevant risk or other health and safety assessments pertinent to their work tasks, and that they carry out their work tasks in accordance with the significant findings of such.

Equal Opportunities

Lancaster City Council is an Equal Opportunities employer and has equal opportunities policies with which you are expected to comply at all times. The City Council condemns all forms of harassment and is actively seeking to promote a workplace where employees are treated with dignity, respect and without bias.

Climate Emergency

You will be expected to conduct your work activities in a way that demonstrates understanding of, and alignment with the requirements of delivering the Council's response to the Climate Emergency.

Community Safety

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act requires local authorities to consider the community safety implications of all their activities. Officers of Lancaster City Council should have an awareness of community safety and consider any community safety implications within their own area of responsibility.

Safeguarding

Lancaster City Council delivers a range of services and activities that impact on the lives of children both directly and indirectly. Safeguarding children, ensuring their welfare, safety and health is of paramount importance. We are committed to providing safe and supportive services that will give children the opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Employee Signature:		Print name:		Date:	
Manager Signature:		Print name:		Date:	