



JOB DESCRIPTION

Directorate:	Housing and Wellbeing
Job title:	Home Visiting Officer
Location:	Guildhall, Northampton
Grade:	Scale 6
Salary:	£30,229- £34,474
Division:	Housing and Wellbeing
Section:	Housing Advice and Options
Reports to:	Homelessness Prevention Team Leader

JOB PURPOSE

To provide an innovative, responsive, solution-focused home visiting service that assists the Council's investigation of homelessness applications, establishes the circumstances of housing applicants and, through intervention and negotiation, minimises the number of households that are made homeless by parents, relatives and friends.

To work collaboratively, imaginatively and proactively with housing applicants, colleagues and other services and organisations to prevent or delay homelessness, move homeless households out of temporary accommodation as quickly as possible and reduce, to an absolute minimum, the number of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

To engage positively and proactively with people who are at risk of becoming homeless to ensure that they are provided with the help, advice and support that they need.

KEY RESULT AREAS

To provide an innovative, responsive, solution-focused home visiting service that assists the Council's investigation of homelessness applications, minimises the number of households that are made homeless by parents, relatives and friends and reduces, to an absolute minimum, the number of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

In doing this, the Home Visiting Officer will:

1. Respond promptly to the Homelessness Reduction Team's requests for a home visit to be carried out to establish the circumstances of households that are claiming they are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, including households living with parents, relatives or friends.
2. Undertake home visits to confirm that the applicant is residing in the property, assess the suitability of their accommodation for occupation and determine the reasons why they are at risk of becoming homeless, in order to assist the homelessness team in determining whether or not the applicant is homeless within the meaning of the homelessness legislation.
3. Assist the Council's investigation and assessment of housing and homelessness applications by collecting or viewing the information and documentation required to verify applicants' circumstances and/or confirm their eligibility, priority need and local connection.
4. Interview housing applicants and their parents, relatives or friends (gathering information from a variety of other sources, as appropriate) to establish the reasons for the breakdown of their relationship and explore ways in which homelessness can be prevented through negotiation, problem-solving and/or professional mediation.
5. Assess housing applicants' eligibility and suitability for all affordable housing options, including private rented accommodation and social / affordable rented housing.
6. Provide housing applicants with comprehensive advice and information on the full range of housing options available to them, taking into account their needs and aspirations, their eligibility for assistance under the homelessness legislation, their priority on the Housing Register and their ability to sustain private rented accommodation.
7. Promote housing options as a means of preventing homelessness and ensuring, where appropriate, that housing applicants are able to make a successful move into a settled home without the need for them to move into temporary accommodation.
8. Develop innovative ways of preventing homelessness and avoiding the use of bed and breakfast (by using motivational interviewing, resolving disagreements and addressing the needs of applicants) and negotiate with parents, relatives and friends to enable the applicant to remain in the home until an appropriate course of action can be agreed and implemented.
9. Establish, develop and maintain close working relations with a broad cross-section of council services and local organisations, in order to facilitate the flow of information, encourage collaboration and co-operation, and secure the help and support that is needed to prevent homelessness, resolve housing problems and meet applicants' housing and support needs.
10. Complete all casework and homelessness prevention and/or relief activity (including research and information gathering, record keeping, assessments, the ongoing review of personalised housing plans, and the timely production of notifications and decision letters) in accordance with Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, relevant guidance and case law, and the Council's policies and procedures.
11. Ensure that all data entry and case recording (including the notes section of Jigsaw) is accurate, up-to-date and completed within agreed timescales, in order to assist performance monitoring, the analysis of trends and the completion of internal and external returns, including the government's quarterly HCLIC return.

12. Maintain a good understanding of the Council's policies and procedures for safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and people affected by domestic violence, and alert Children's Services and/or Adult Social Care if it is suspected that a child or vulnerable adult might be being abused, neglected or harmed.
13. Provide the Homelessness Reduction Team and/or the Temporary Accommodation Team with a written report on the outcome of each home visit (including a comprehensive assessment of the household's circumstances and recommendations for any follow-up action) in order to inform their investigations and decision-making.
14. Undertake follow-up visits and casework, ensuring that all cases are actively managed and monitored for as long as the Home Visiting Officer is continuing to work with the applicant.
15. Ensure that an accurate, comprehensive record is kept of all visits, telephone calls and follow-up action taken (and that files are maintained to a high standard) in order to assist monitoring, decision-making and effective case management.
16. Work collaboratively with the Homelessness Assessment Team to actively monitor the circumstances of all households that are 'homeless at home' in order to ensure that the households remain eligible for assistance and wish to continue with their housing application.
17. Contribute positively to the development of new working practices and initiatives designed to prevent homelessness, increase the supply of good quality private rented accommodation and reduce the number of households made homeless by parents, relatives and friends.
18. Meet regularly with the Homelessness Prevention Team Leader to review performance, resolve problems, inform decision making and ensure a high standard of work, an equitable distribution of the workload and the effective monitoring of performance against targets.
19. Support the regular review and updating of the Homelessness Prevention Team's processes, policies and procedures, ensuring they comply with the law and reflect good practice.
20. Create and maintain accurate records (using manual and computer systems) on all aspects of the Home Visiting Service to ensure compliance with agreed reporting arrangements and provide management with the information it requires to monitor performance.
21. Actively consider new and innovative ways of doing things, recognising and promoting the positive benefits of change as a means of improving services and achieving goals.
22. Recognise personal and professional boundaries, work in a safe manner and contribute positively to the creation of a safe and healthy working environment, in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures, to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements.
23. Maintain professional competence and keep abreast of developments through research and reading, and by attending relevant courses, meetings and supervision.
24. Perform any other duties (consistent with the grade and objectives of the post) that are required by the Homelessness Reduction Manager and Housing Advice & Options Manager in order to ensure the delivery of a high quality, responsive and caring Home Visiting Service.

Job descriptions will be subject to review and possible change on an annual basis subject to corporate and service plan priorities.

PEOPLE AND RESOURCES

The Home Visiting Officer is not responsible for the management of any budgets or the supervision, management and direction of any employees.

Other people both external and internal

- (i) The Postholder will act on behalf of the Council (as an ambassador and/or negotiator, as appropriate) in relation to:
- Other local authorities and public bodies including governmental organisations
 - Organisations representing private landlords, tenants and homeless people
 - Organisations representing carers and people with disabilities
 - Charities, social landlords, supported housing providers and other non-governmental organisations
 - Other key stakeholder groups – including local advice and support providers
- (ii) The Postholder will work with Councillors, managers and employees of the Council to meet the Council's aims and objectives.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES

- To ensure that the services delivered by the Council are designed to meet the needs of Northampton's diverse customer base and are delivered to the highest possible standards.
- To make a positive corporate contribution, including contributing to corporate projects and initiatives which may cross cut service boundaries
- To work positively with partners in the best interests of Northampton promoting a "Team Northampton" approach.

DATA PROTECTION ACT / FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Working with manual and computerised systems, the Postholder will need to be fully aware, at all times, of their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and Data Protection Acts of 1998 & 2018 for the security, accuracy and relevance of personal data held on such systems, and to be conversant with the implications of the Freedom of Information Act. The Postholder will also be required to be fully aware of, and comply with, the Council's Data Quality procedures to ensure that all management information is accurate and fit for purpose.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

	Essential/Desirable ?		Methods of Assessment (Yes = Y)			
	E?	D?	Application Form	References	Interview	Other
KNOWLEDGE						
Sound understanding and awareness of housing and homelessness	E		Y		Y	
Experience of working with people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, in housing need and/or living in unsatisfactory housing	E		Y		Y	
Experience of effective team working	E		Y	Y	Y	
Experience of providing advice on housing and homelessness issues and/or entitlement to welfare benefits	E		Y		Y	
Knowledge of the homelessness legislation and guidance, including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	E		Y		Y	
Proven success in preventing homelessness through imaginative problem-solving and skilful negotiation and/or mediation	E		Y		Y	
Experience of developing and sustaining effective working relationships, and works successfully in partnership with other services and organisations	E		Y	Y	Y	
Experience of managing a range of complex tasks, with competing demands, and successfully responding to changing circumstances and priorities	E		Y	Y	Y	
Proven experience of successfully managing a large caseload, undertaking research and meeting agreed standards and objectives	E		Y		Y	
Experience of using IT applications, including Microsoft and specialist housing and/or homelessness systems	E		Y		Y	

KNOWLEDGE (continued)	E?	D?	Application Form	References	Interview	Other
An understanding of equality and diversity	E		Y		Y	
An understanding of the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation	E		Y		Y	
An understanding of the requirement to ensure accurate data entry into record keeping systems for the purpose of producing statistical returns	E		Y		Y	
SKILLS						
Literate and numerate	E		Y			Y
Excellent listening and interviewing skills, with a proven ability to motivate people	E		Y	Y	Y	
An effective team player with a proven ability to develop positive relationships with colleagues, managers and other services and organisations	E		Y	Y	Y	
A skilled problem-solver and negotiator with an organised and imaginative approach to work and the ability to manage difficult and sensitive situations	E		Y	Y	Y	
A proven ability to look critically at existing practices and to recommend smarter ways of doing things that deliver better outcomes for customers	E		Y		Y	
Ability to maintain accurate records and case files in electronic and paper format	E		Y		Y	
Excellent IT skills with the ability to use a range of Microsoft Office programmes and specialist IT systems.	E		Y		Y	

SKILLS (continued)	E?	D?	Application Form	References	Interview	Other
Understanding of the requirement to ensure accurate data entry into record keeping systems for the purpose of producing statistical returns	E		Y		Y	
ATTRIBUTES						
A self-starter who is outcome focused and target driven	E		Y	Y	Y	
Full driving licence and access to own transport for work purposes	E		Y	Y	Y	Y

REVIEW AND SIGNATURES

This document will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it continues to reflect our vision, values and priorities.

Prepared by:	Vijay Sirohi
Job title:	Housing Advice & Options Manager
Date:	December 2018 (Pay scale updated to 2020/21)

Job evaluation date:	
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Name of job holder:	
Job holder's signature:	
Date:	