Gravesham Borough Council

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| **Division:** | Housing & Operations |
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| **Department:** | Housing Options |
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| **Post Title:** | Single persons Homeless & Rough Sleeping Officer |
| **Grade:** | SO1 |
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| **Hours** | 37 |
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| **Responsible to:** | Rough Sleeping Partnership Manager |

**Job Description**

To provide homeless advice and guidance to households that are homeless or in threat of homelessness in accordance with the council’s statutory duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

This job description is intended as a working document only, giving a guideline to the major tasks to be performed. It is anticipated that the post will develop as working practices change in order to meet the demands of the service, new legislation or policies of the council. It is expected the post holder will contribute to and assist in the development of such changes

**Job summary**

1. Provide effective, customer-friendly and efficient service to single applicants an clients who are often vulnerable and with complex needs who are presenting with housing problems; to support them in keeping their current home, (carrying out home visits where appropriate), or in accessing a new home in the public or private housing sector.
2. To advise clients, either face-to-face, via Teams or over the phone, on full range of housing options, in the context of a high demand London local authority. This includes appropriate intervention if threatened with homelessness, assistance to secure private rented accommodation, hostels, supported housing, refuges, etc, and any actions to make accommodation more affordable and accessible.
3. To assess clients’ housing requirements in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. A high percentage of people presenting will be vulnerable and it is essential to assess needs accurately and in accordance with all relevant legislation, including Housing Act 1996 (as amended), the Care Act 2014 and the Children’s Act 1989 and all relevant housing legislation.
4. To collate and analyse initial information and documentation relating to a client’s circumstances using available prevention tools and deciding in line with new legislation when to move an application from a prevention or relief stage to the final duty the council may owe the applicant.
5. To maintain a regular and constructive relationship with the individual throughout their homeless application, ensuring that they are engaged in the *reasonable steps* agreed, and that the postholder completes the *reasonable steps* agreed on the part of the local authority, all within the designated timescales.
6. To use relevant identity/credit software that enables the service to check and verify the accuracy of a homeless approach or application, and the circumstances affecting the client.
7. To write and issue statutory S184 decision letters, letters of referral to other authorities where an applicant’s local connection lies elsewhere, and outcome letters, to advise the applicant of the outcome of their initial interview.
8. To comply with all relevant statutory requirements, Government Guidance and Codes of conduct, Gravesham Borough Councils policies and procedures, professional and performance standards and good housing and homelessness prevention practice.
9. To ensure full and accurate records of all clients, all advice and support provided. To maintain accurate written and computer records, reports, & other monitoring information as required in connection with the various duties and case management.
10. To develop effective working relationships with colleagues within Newham, other councils and statutory bodies, external agencies, clients and landlords as well as voluntary and other housing organisations.
11. To advise clients of available tenancy support services including income maximisation, Discretionary Housing Payments, debt and rent arrears advice and HB support.
12. To assist in developing full range of information and publicity for all clients as well as internal procedures. To understand the value of information to the council and to contribute to good information governance by keeping information safe, accurate and up to date and available to those who need it. The post holder is required to abide by the council’s information governance policies.
13. To be a champion for excellent customer service delivery and customer care and contribute to the development and delivery of an integrated service.
14. To be self-serving with respect to administration, case record keeping and other related duties and utilise IT systems to update and record information required according to guidance and established procedures.
15. To participate in appraisals, one to ones, objective settings, personal development plans and working group meetings and take a full and active role in service development, including service reviews.
16. To carry out the duties of the post in accordance with the Data Protection Act, the Health & Safety at Work Act and other relevant legislation, as well as Council policies, procedures, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
17. Ensure Rough Sleeping referrals are made for customers who require further support by the rough sleeping team.
18. Ensure verified rough sleeping customers applications are prioritised.
19. Attend Bi-monthly and annual rough sleeping count.
20. To work closely with other professionals, such as Social Workers, Probation Officers and Welfare Benefit Advisers, creating a strong and effective relationship, whilst maintaining the provisions of the full range of housing duties placed on the local authority and as set out in statute and caselaw.
21. To provide a professional and effective housing options interview and homelessness investigation service; taking a full application from the service user and issuing Personalised Housing Plans in preventing or relieving homelessness irrespective of the person’s priority need or intentionality status.
22. Arrange emergency accommodation for customers who are eligible, homeless and in priority need, managing their stay in emergency accommodation by maintaining regular contact and ensuring they are receiving the right benefits where eligible.
23. Attend multi-agency meetings with both statutory and voluntary organisations in order to identify and assist with the housing and support needs of vulnerable customers; ex-offenders, persons with mental health or physical disability issues; or high-risk victims of domestic abuse including RSI meetings.
24. Collect and provide accurate records to Homeless Prevention Team Manager in order for quarterly H-Click & statistics required for the central government to be accurate.
25. Make recommendations to the Rough Sleeping partnership Manager for the payment of loans and grants in order resolve and prevent homelessness.
26. To undertake any other duties appropriate to the grade, that may be required. These may be varied from time to time to meet the needs of the service.

**Main responsibilities**

To prevent or relieve homelessness in accordance with the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act, associated Code of Guidance, case law and best practice.

To assess people’s housing need, reflecting their specific circumstances, creating tailored Personal Housing Plans to either prevent or relieve homelessness and with a full understanding of the vulnerabilities and complexities presented by individuals.

To manage a complex and demanding case load in a busy and often challenging environment, ensuring all options are thoroughly explored.

To undertake the assessment and investigation of homeless applications under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) where prevention/relief is not possible and inform clients of their assessment outcome.

To ensure verified rough sleepers are provided homelessness assessments and work with the rough sleeping team to prevent rough sleeping.

To refer vulnerable customers into supported accommodation to prevent or relief homelessness.

To be responsible for placement ensuring the length of stay is kept to a minimum.

To engage in Bi-monthly and Annual Street counts and other activities necessary to support single homelessness customers.

To respond to telephone calls and correspondence within the Council`s specified target timescales.

Working in partnership with internal business partners and other external agencies contribute to the achievement of Council’s overall performance objectives, community development, sustainability and development.

To maintain high levels of good customer care and empathy throughout. We may not always be able to give people what they want, but we should always be honest and treat them with respect, in consideration of their situation.

**General**

To carry out such other duties as may be required of you, commensurate with the grade and level of responsibility, as directed by management.

To participate as required in the Council’s Emergency Planning Operations which may involve duties outside the post holder’s normal job description and contracted hours.  In the event that an incident has occurred which disrupts the council’s ability to deliver it’s critical functions, the post holder will be expected to participate in the recovery stage which may include undertaking duties within the post holder’s competencies in other departments and/or at other locations.

A commitment and contribution to the Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy is an essential requirement of the post.

The post holder will carry out all duties and activities having regard to the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and in accordance with any instructions from senior members of staff under that Act or any Council or Departmental Codes of Practice or Procedures.

The post holder must ensure that data quality and integrity is maintained and that data is processed in accordance with council policy, the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act and other legislation

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|  | **PERSON SPECIFICATION** |  |
|  | ESSENTIAL | DESIRABLE |
| SKILLS/ABILITIES  (Specific skills and abilities required to undertake the duties) | Excellent written, numerical and oral communication skills.  Excellent negotiation skills.  Be organised and have a good attention to detail.  Ability to communicate effectively with customers and professionals from a variety of backgrounds.  Ability to deal well with difficult and vulnerable customers.  Ability to work on own initiative and as part of a team.  Ability to solve problems and guide others in decision making.  Ability to confidently use computer systems such as MS Office and Locata.  Ability to write reports and understand corporate processes. | Project management skills |
| KNOWLEDGE  (Particular knowledge which will be necessary to perform the work effectively, e.g. of specific legislation or regulations) | Knowledge of the local authority’s role in homelessness and the allocation of social housing, including tenancy law, eligibility for housing assistance, homeless legislation, mutual exchange and different types of tenure.  Knowledge of housing related computer systems.  Knowledge of the challenges that are faced with rough sleeping. |  |
| QUALIFICATION  TRAINING  (Educational/vocational qualifications and other training)  Verification will be required | 4 GCSE’s at grade C or above, including Maths and English, or equivalent qualifications  Level 3 Certificate and/or Level 4 diploma in Housing Studies or equivalent | Any other qualifications that could be used in this area of Housing |
| EXPERIENCE  (Level and type of previous experience) | Housing related experience.  Experience in making decisions in accordance with Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.  Experience of dealing with difficult customers and conflict management.  Experience of dealing with vulnerable customers with complex difficulties.  Experience of working within a busy environment.  Experience of working with housing related computer systems. |  |
| QUALITIES  (Particular qualities necessary to carry out the works,e.g.ability to work under pressure or work cooperatively in a team) | Can work under pressure and to deadlines.  Ability to act on own initiative and be proactive in improving procedures, processes and customer service |  |
| SPECIAL CONDITIONS  (e.g. willingness to work unsocial hours or wear a uniform) | Must have adaptable and flexible attitude to work requirements  Commitment to equal opportunities  Out of hours working on a rota | Driving License |