**Job Description

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

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| **Job Title:**  | Housing Options Officer |
| **Business Unit :** | Community Safety |
| **Service:-** | Housing Options Service |
| **Responsible To:** | Housing Options Team Leader |
| **Accountable To:**  | Housing Options Manager |
| **Salary Grade:** ***JE Ref:*** | Grade G, Scp 18 - 23COMSA146 |

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| 1. **Key Purpose of Job**
	1. To provide comprehensive advice in line with government legislation to the public and other agencies on housing options with the aim of preventing homelessness.
	2. To accurately assess and discharge the council’s duty to homeless applicants in line with the legal framework for homelessness.
	3. To actively case manage clients to prevent and manage homelessness .
	4. To assist people to access the private rented sector through discretionary housing benefit payments and other method to enable them to access accommodation.
	5. To assist people to access social housing via Devon Home Choice where appropriate through providing guidance around qualify criteria and managing expectation.
	6. To maximise collaborative working with other agencies and Council departments to prevent homelessness.
	7. To promote the safeguarding of adults and children who use the service.
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| 1. **Anticipated Outcomes of Post**
	1. The prevention of homelessness through targeted early interventions and the provision of advice and Information.
	2. The coordination of services across agencies to ensure appropriate housing solutions are provided to those that are most vulnerable and or at risk of reoffending
	3. Effective case management of applications for assistance in cases of homelessness that are thoroughly investigated and decisions issued without reference to others. Private rented sector accommodation is accessed and becomes a sustainable option in terms of affordability and quality.
	4. Customer expectations are managed through local service delivery that is developed in a multi agency way that is flexible and meets changing local need.
	5. The safeguarding of adults and children is embedded into service delivery.
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| 1. **List Key Duties and accountabilities of the post**
	1. To carry out the council’s statutory duties under Housing legislation:
* Applying homelessness legislation and case law accurately and consistently, including assessment of vulnerabilities and making decisions on wither homeless applications are successful or not. To accurately undertake investigation to obtain information sufficient to determine the council’s obligations under homeless legislation and to investigate the details of the homeless applications, including obtaining documentary evidence, making enquiries of other agencies and personal verification.
* To manage cases to ensure that suitable provision is put in place to ensure statutory compliance and the protection of vulnerable individuals.
	1. To interview and respond to client’s enquiry’s to assess their housing circumstances via pre-set and emergency duty appointments, telephone assessments and or appointments at other locations such as the hostel etc.
	2. To undertake effectively and accurately case manage to ensure appropriate outcomes for complex homelessness and housing applications are achieved.
	3. Carrying out outreach work and home visits (for those unable to attend appointments).
	4. Provide comprehensive advice and advocacy on clients housing rights, availability of welfare benefits and financial management. To signpost clients to specialist advice agencies as appropriate.
	5. To pro-actively take action to prevent the loss of accommodation either as a short or long term solution using all means available avoiding the use of emergency accommodation wherever possible.
	6. To prevent homelessness through increasing access to the private rented sector and reducing demand on the local authority by:
* Ensuring prompt completion of necessary housing benefit forms.
* Applying and assisting clients to apply for discretionary housing benefit payments
* Actively promoting private rented housing options rather than social rented housing.
* Ensuring the client is aware of their obligation to make prompt rent payments and save towards deposits.
* Provide quality housing advice to prevent and minimise homelessness and to enable them to resolve their own housing difficulties.
	1. To prevent homelessness or provide appropriate housing options for vulnerable individuals by establishing multi agency meetings and actions plans to enable a holistic approach be undertaken.
	2. To attend outreach sessions providing housing advices to challenging and difficult to engage clients.
	3. Work with the Housing Standards Team on improving the overall standards of accommodation and services, making referrals when accommodation is believed to need improving or poses a risk based upon an assessment.
	4. Review other Prevention and Homeless cases of other ‘Housing Options Officers’ to ensure legal compliance.
	5. To assist customers to access and move-on from Temporary Accommodation.
	6. To investigate cases of harassment or illegal eviction and prepare cases for prosecution where appropriate.
	7. To ensure a customer focused approach at all times by dealing with face to face, telephone and written queries by customers in line with the Council’s Customer Charter.
	8. To effectively liaise with other sections of the council and external agencies to improve the services and information to our customers, where appropriate
	9. Proactively deal with all referrals from hospitals & related housing queries from hospitals.
	10. To carry out such other appropriate duties as may be required by the head of service commensurate with the grade of this post.
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| 1. **Give examples of the typical types of problems and decisions the post will be required to make**
	1. Decide when an accommodation duty is owed to a client using current homeless legislation based on the evidence provided and further investigations. This decision is open to legal challenge and as such needs to be robust to limit financial and reputational risk to the Local Authority.
	2. To engage with a variety of agencies to ensure that appropriate prevention tools are utilised to assist clients. This may involve pulling together a multi agency meeting including mental health, ASB team, third sector support, Police etc, to enable clients to be placed that are appropriately supported or risk to the community is mitigated.
	3. To attend MARAC (Domestic abuse meetings) or IOM (Integrated Offender Management) meetings as the housing specialist to provide specialist advise and find accommodation solutions as to protect vulnerable individuals and reduce the risk of harm to life. This often involves a problem solving approach due to the nature of the clients and inappropriateness of standard solutions.
	4. To assess what help clients to find suitable accommodation so that they can move out of emergency accommodation to give them the best chance of sustaining their tenancy.
	5. Proactively liaise and mediate with clients & social landlords to prevent repossessions & evictions requiring excellent communication and negotiations skills as to prevent homelessness and additional resource pressures.
	6. Attend and work with multi agency groups to support and problem solve issues related to vulnerable clients especially in the management of ASB and mental health.
	7. Assessment of information and preparation of cases including undertaking interviews under caution and taking statements with regards to undertaking a prosecution.
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| 1. **Budgetary / Financial Responsibilities of the post**

None. |

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| 1. **Supervision / Line Management Responsibilities of the post ( Please show / provide organisation structure as an appendices, showing official reporting lines)**

None. |

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| 1. **Working Environment & Conditions of the post**
	1. Normal working environment although will be expected to attend home visits and undertake assessments in properties or engage with individuals on the streets.
	2. Client group are likely to be challenging and have complex needs, with the majority of engagement not being outside of the office environment.
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| 1. **Physical Demands of the post**
	1. Normal physical effort
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| 1. **Specific Resources used by the post**
	1. PC, mobile phone etc.
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| 1. **Key Contacts and Relationships**

**External** NHScare trust, GP’s, temporary accommodation providers, supporting people providers, letting agents, landlords, other support providers, registered landlords, advocacy agencies, social services, Probation, Police, IOM, housing needs services across Devon, and any other voluntary and statutory agencies. **Internal** Housing benefit, affordable housing, Children services, Social services, wider Community Safety team - Housing Standards, and ASB, Connections, Call centre, other council departments, elected members and Senior Manager. |
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**Other Information**

* 1. All staff must commit to Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discriminatory Practice.
	2. Adhere to Housing Services Lone Working Policy
	3. Adhere to the Council’s Safeguarding Policy for Adults and the Safeguarding Policy for the Protection of Children
	4. Adhere to Housing Legislation, Code of guidance and the service procedures .
	5. The Council operates a Smoke-Free Policy and the post-holder is prohibited from smoking in any of the Council's buildings (including Council owned and Council leased buildings, but excluding designated areas in residential schemes), enclosed spaces within the curtilage of buildings, and Council vehicles. **Staff will not be released for a break that is specifically for smoking.**
	6. The post-holder is expected to familiarise themselves with and adhere to all relevant Council Policies and Procedures.
	7. The post-holder must comply with the Council’s Health and Safety requirements as outlined in the H&S policy appropriate to the role.
	8. This post is based at Torquay Town Hall but the post holder may be required to move their base to any other location within the Council at a future date.
	9. As this post meets the requirements in respect of exempted questions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, all applicants who are offered employment will be subject to a criminal record check (Disclosure) from the Criminal Records Bureau before the appointment is confirmed. This will include details of ALL cautions, reprimands or final warnings as well as convictions, whether “spent” or “unspent”. Criminal convictions will only be taken into account when they are relevant to the post.

**Person Specification**

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| **Note for Candidate****All Candidates**The supporting statement on your application form will be used to assess ability to meet the essential requirements of the role, so you should explain how you meet each of the numbered essential requirements within your supporting statement.  In a competitive situation, the desirable criteria may be taken into consideration, so you are encouraged to show how you also meet each of the desirable criteria.Candidates who consider that they have a disability**Reasonable adjustments will be made to the job, job requirements or recruitment process for candidates with a disability.****If you consider yourself to have a disability you should indicate this on your application form, providing any information you would like us to take into account with regard to your disability in order to offer a fair selection interview.****Where ever possible and reasonable we will make adjustments and offer alternatives to help you through the application and selection process.** **If you have indicated that you have a disability on your application form you will be guaranteed an interview if you clearly demonstrate in your supporting evidence how you broadly meet the essential requirements of the role.**  |

**Person Specification**

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| **Job Title:** | Housing Options Officer | **Business Unit:** | Community Safety | **Team/Service:** | Housing Options Service |

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| **Essential Skills and Effectiveness:** | **Desirable Skills and Effectiveness:** |
| 1. Ability to interpret and apply relevant Homeless, Housing and Health legislation to ensure that statutory duties are maintained.
2. Ability to problem solve and think and act creatively to apply different working solutions to ensure legislative compliance and value for money for the local authority.
3. Ability to deal with difficult situations in a calm and sympathetic manner, especially in dealing with vulnerable individuals in complex situations.
4. To undertake interviews, this may also include those under legal caution, to undertake an assessment of need and compliance with legislation.
5. To be able to communicate with clarity, tact and purpose in all relevant situations especially those of a sensitive and emotional nature.
6. Good organisational ability, particularly self organization, ability to see tasks through to a successful conclusion, whilst working to tight deadlines.
7. Attention to detail and ability to maintain accurate records to provide accountability, deliverability and to be used as evidence if required.
8. Ability to establish positive relationships with partners generating confidence and respect.
9. Able to elicit information from service users, careers and professionals staff to make informed decisions.
10. High standard of report writing including the preparation of prosecution files in the case of illegal eviction or other appropriate action.
11. Ability to use appropriate computer packages including case management systems.
12. Efficient time management skills to be able to work to tight deadlines.
 | 1.13 Presentation skills1.14 Ability to contribute towards change and innovation |
| **Essential Knowledge:** | **Desirable Knowledge:** |
| * 1. Current and in-depth knowledge of homelessness legislation, case law, codes of practice.
	2. In-depth knowledge of housing benefits to maximum financial recovery for the local authority and to mitigate financial risk.
	3. Current and in-depth knowledge on the different forms of tenancy to provide different working solution and creative outcomes.
	4. Ability to critically assess if an offence has been committed under housing, benefit or tenancy legislation and take action as required.
	5. Ability to undertake risk assessments with regards to the placement of tenants and hazardous conditions in properties under Housing Act legislation.
	6. Detailed knowledge and understanding of case management and the appropriate provision of information to external agencies to ensure safeguarding and data breaches do not occur.
 | * 1. Knowledge of the principles underpinning provision of a comprehensive range of housing services.
	2. Private Sector letting arrangements
	3. Awareness of Welfare rights and benefits and the potential impact of changes/proposed changes.
	4. Knowledge of the local housing environment and housing letting schemes including Devon Home Choice.
	5. Knowledge of Children's Act 1989 and hence duties of the local authority.
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| **Essential Experience/Achievements:** | **Desirable Experience / Achievements:** |
| * 1. Conducting interviews and assessments of applicants under the Housing Act 1996, Part VII Significant experience in homelessness advice or related work.
	2. At least 2 year experience as Housing Options Officer (or related field )
	3. Minimum of 2 years relevant experience of interviewing/dealing with the public.
	4. Experience of making own decisions without reference to senior officers.
	5. Experience of managing complex case work in a multi agency environment and working in partnership.
	6. Experience of working with competing deadlines whilst meeting targets
	7. Chairing and calling meeting to ensure that a holist approach is undertaken to client management.
 | * 1. Working in a Local Government Environment
	2. Allocations/Lettings process
	3. Experience of dealing with people with challenging behavior and complex needs including mental health issues
	4. Working in a housing environment or directly related area, e.g. welfare benefits, CAB.
	5. Experience of performance and quality control management in a results orientated environment.
	6. Attending Court to give evidence
	7. Ability to undertake HHSRS assessments under Housing standards legislation.
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| **Essential Qualifications/Professional Memberships:** | **Desirable Qualifications/Professional Memberships:** |
| * 1. Educated to at least HND level or equivalent or relevant experience
	2. ECDL or equivalent IT experience.
	3. Professional qualification in housing or related area or relevant experience
 | * 1. Up to date training in enforcement issues and relevant legislative requirements.
	2. HHSRS Qualification.
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**Other requirements of the job**

1. Ability to carry out the physical requirements of the role (i.e. manual handling)
2. Ability to travel efficiently around the Bay in order to carry out duties
3. Ability to accommodate unsociable hours **August 2018**