

Job capsule supplementary information	
Position	Housing Needs Officer
Department/ location	Housing Options
Reports to	Housing Needs Manager
Staffing responsibilities	None

Role purpose
<p>The key purpose of the housing needs officer post is to provide a high standard of housing assessment and homeless prevention to customers requesting help for housing assistance and to meet the Council's statutory duties towards housing applicants under the Housing Act 1996 Parts VI and VII.</p> <p>The role will be required to make good quality decisions on homelessness and housing need in accordance with the law, policies and procedures operating within the department and reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation and unsuitable housing in the borough.</p>
Main duties and responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prevent homelessness and resolve housing difficulties through comprehensive advice and assistance using a range of prevention tools such as discretionary housing payments, the homeless prevention fund and where prevention is unsuccessful, to provide comprehensive housing options advice. • To holistically assess a customer's circumstances by conducting interviews, undertaking visits to customers in their homes, conducting enquiries and collecting information to be able to verify their circumstances and their eligibility for housing in line with the council's Allocation Scheme, Housing Act 1996 Parts VI and VII, the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. • To make specific recommendations on suitability and affordability in accordance with the Council's Local Placements Policy so that any future accommodation that may be offered to a housing applicant meets their needs. • To take a casework approach to customer's enquiry keeping and maintaining detailed written reports of developments in each case according to established procedure, preparing and keeping under review PHPs. • To effectively manage a caseload ensuring that cases are prioritised and decisions are issued in a timely manner to not only reduce the risk of temporary accommodation admissions but also limit the time customers spend in temporary accommodation. • To make comprehensive and robust legal decisions under the Housing Act 1996 Parts VI and VII that will stand up to legal challenge.

- To conduct first stage appeals from customers on the band that they have been placed into under the Housing Allocation Scheme.
- To provide comprehensive housing advice on matters such as eligibility, homelessness, security of tenure, public and private sector tenancies, housing and welfare benefits, income maximisation, arrears, harassment, unlawful eviction, home ownership, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, and other necessary areas of advice with the aim of preventing homelessness and issuing good quality decisions.
- To be able to understand and analyse complex information and to effectively communicate at all levels either face to face, by telephone, in writing or electronically, for example, with senior managers, solicitors and customers whose first language may not be English.
- To ensure that personal knowledge of relevant housing advice and associated issues and legislation is kept up to date through the research and attendance at training provided by Barnet Homes.
- To demonstrate a strong working knowledge of the following areas of law and guidance: Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Homelessness Code of Guidance, Housing Act 1988, Protection from Eviction Act 1977, Children Act 1989, ss 17 and 20, Human rights Act 1998, Asylum and Immigration legislation plus Statutory instruments and regulations as they relate
- To follow safeguarding procedures and policies to ensure vulnerable children and adults with housing difficulties receive the right services at the right time including the attendance at case conferences when required.
- To detect and report any incidents of suspected fraud to the relevant senior officer and to liaise with other departments such as the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CAFT), Housing Benefit, internal Audit and Legal.
- To be committed to providing constructive feed-back to and ideas to colleagues about the quality of the service, system and procedures being provided to customers in order to ensure the Service continually improves from the customer's perspective.
- To participate in frontline rotas as required.

General Obligations

Performance management

Ensure that performance targets are met and a culture of performance management, customer care, value for money and resident / service users' empowerment is embedded across the Group

Flexibility

Work with a degree of flexibility required to perform work not specifically referred to above although falling within the scope of the post at the appropriate grade.

Health and Safety

All employees have a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of people at work and members of the public in premises or sites controlled by The Barnet Group in accordance with safety legislation and The Barnet Group safety policy.

The Barnet Group's commitment

Deliver The Barnet Group's commitment to equality of opportunity both in the provision of services and as an employer. Promote equality in the work place and in the services The Barnet Group delivers.

Promote and demonstrate commitment to a culture of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Person Specification

Job title: Housing Needs Officer

Education, Qualifications, Memberships

- Degree level education or equivalent through relevant training/experience
- Strong working knowledge and understanding of current housing law

Experience

Essential:

- Proven track record of partnership, multi-agency working and networking skills.

Desirable:

- 12 months experience of a customer facing role within housing.

Skills and Knowledge

Essential:

- Strong working knowledge and understanding of current housing law
- A demonstrably high standard of verbal and written literacy and numeracy
- IT Literate: Ability to work with databases and MS Office applications

Excellent oral and written communication skills and the ability to effectively engage with a diverse range of audiences, including managers, landlords, solicitors and vulnerable customers, in a courteous and professional manner and at times in stressful situations

- Ability to liaise effectively with other agencies and voluntary groups
- Ability to resolve difficult and confrontational situations
- Ability to maintain accurate case notes ensuring they are completed in a timely manner within target timescales and to maintain information on databases
- Ability to ensure that cases are handed over seamlessly to colleagues
- Ability to prioritise well within a challenging workload, particularly to ensure the most urgent enquiries are dealt with appropriately
- Ability to work effectively and flexibly as part of a team and to support colleagues, including managers, within a team
- Ability to operate effectively in a changing environment, to develop and acquire new skills and knowledge

Desirable:

Knowledge of latest legislation such as immigration and welfare benefits (Housing Acts 1996, 1988, 2002, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Homelessness Code of Guidance, Allocations Code of guidance, Protection from Eviction Act 1977, Children's Act 1989 and Localism Act 2011

Values	Behaviour Indicators
Show respect	Treat other people as you wish to be treated yourself
Find solutions	Think outside the box, and be innovative
Make a difference	Go the extra mile to show your customers you really care
Be person-centred	Treat everyone you meet as an individual, and remember, one size does not fit all