

**NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POST TITLE:** Senior Housing Options Officer

**BUSINESS UNIT:** Housing , Health and  
Community Relations

**POST NUMBER:** 589

**SECTION:** Housing Options

**GRADE:** NS11

**DATE:** September 2020

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**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Housing and Safeguarding Business Manager

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**LIAISON WITH:** General public, Other Council Departments, Housing Associations, Landlords, Police, Probation, Members of the Council, Solicitors, GPs, Social Services, Building Societies, Benefits Agency, voluntary & statutory bodies and other appropriate persons..

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**PURPOSE OF JOB:** To assist the Housing, Health and Community Relations Business Manager in delivering the Local Authority's statutory duties to homeless and potentially homeless applicants in accordance with legislation. This includes the prevention of homelessness through early intervention and provision of comprehensive housing advice and assistance.

To provide day to day management and supervision to officers from the housing options service.

To undertake the day to day management of the council's temporary accommodation.

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**MAIN ACTIVITIES, DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. To provide general day to day management and supervision of officers from the team including housing options officer, tenancy support workers, landlord liaison officer and older person's worker.
2. To hold regular team meetings and staff training sessions to ensure the best possible communication flow and ensure that all team members are up to date on service delivery.

3. Undertake the day to day management of the council's temporary accommodation which includes ensuring accommodation is available to use and is let in accordance with relevant homelessness legislation and void processes to maximise availability and keep costs such as council tax to a minimum.
4. Where necessary make applications to the court with the support of legal services relating to enforcement at and eviction from temporary accommodation.
5. Undertake all Section 202 Homelessness Reviews that are submitted to the authority ensuring that all legal processes and timescales are upheld. Where necessary prepare for and attend court with relevant legal representation.
6. To undertake assessment and audit of random statutory homelessness decisions to ensure consistency in decision making.
7. Negotiate on a client's behalf in cases of harassment or illegal eviction, formally caution people suspected of offences contrary to the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and conduct interviews of suspects, taking statements which comply with The Criminal Justice Act 1967, sec 9, using PACE interview guidelines, with support when required from the Business Manager. Ensure that witnesses are aware of and attend any planned court hearings, liaising between the Legal Services and the complainant.
8. Implement, maintain and develop any Homelessness systems, with guidance from the Business Manager.
9. Investigate entitlement to Discretionary Housing Payments and to support any applications made to the Benefits section.
10. To authorise Homelessness Prevention Fund payments, as agreed in the policy and procedures.
11. As agreed with the Business Manager, identify, recommend and justify proposals/changes to existing Council policy and services as required.
12. Assist with the collation and production of reports and briefings, as identified by the Business Manager, including those for, but not limited to, Senior Managers within the Authority and appropriate Committees.
13. Assist the Business Manager with the collation and preparation of statistical information relating to performance, contributing to the development of the Strategic Housing Performance Plan and Homelessness Review and Strategy.
14. Coordinate, collate, complete and submit performance information as required to central government including the DCLG quarterly P1E return and its replacement – H-Clic.

15. Investigate and respond as appropriate to MP, Councillor and other enquiries, complaints and compliments.
16. Contribute, as required and when necessary, with guidance from the Business Manager, in the Homelessness Interagency Forum and in the development, implementation and monitoring of the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.
17. Be committed to the principles of Best Value and continuous improvement to develop services.

### **Assessment Duties**

18. Carry out an assessment of all applicants who contact the Authority due to being homeless or threatened with homeless.
19. For applicants assessed as being eligible for assistance under existing legislation draw up and agree a personalised housing plan (PHP). The plan will record the actions required by both parties to obtain/retain in suitable accommodation.

### **Prevention Duties**

20. Assist in the development of homelessness prevention projects and deliver a comprehensive homelessness prevention and advice service to help achieve a reduction in overall homelessness levels in the District.
21. Take reasonable steps to help an eligible applicant who is threatened with homelessness to secure that their existing accommodation does not stop being available for their occupation. These steps may include, but are not limited to negotiating with landlords, agents, other agencies or relevant parties (such as family and friends) to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available to an applicant whenever possible.
22. Mediate to resolve potential homeless cases, irrespective of tenure (excluding fear of violence).
23. Determine and agree reasonable steps for both the local authority and the applicant to undertake. Ensure these are added to the applicants PHP.
24. Take all reasonable steps during the prevention duty (in excess of 56 days in some cases) to secure existing or find alternative accommodation.
25. Throughout the process issue the applicant with relevant letters that confirm their legal status with the authority and show what duties are owed.

## **Relief and Main Homelessness Duties**

26. Take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness irrespective of priority need, by helping an applicant to secure suitable accommodation. The steps to be taken should be informed from the PHP and could include, but are not limited to a 6 months assured shorthold tenancy.
27. To make detailed investigations and make decisions on any main homelessness duty, in line with legislation and advise applicants accordingly in writing as well as maintaining and updating their PHP.
28. Ensure that temporary accommodation is made available for any person who is eligible for interim accommodation duties as per the legislation.
29. To maintain records of persons moving into and out of temporary accommodation and to inform other officers as appropriate.
30. To provide appropriate support and assistance to households in temporary accommodation in finding alternative move-on accommodation.
31. Take all reasonable steps during the relief duty (56 days) to secure suitable accommodation.
32. Throughout the process issue the applicant with relevant letters that confirm their legal status with the authority and show what duties are owed.
33. Where the relief duty is ending (should not exceed 56 days) and no alternative accommodation has been secured officers will need to investigate and issue a decision regarding an applicant's main housing duty which will include the assessment of priority need and intentionality.
34. To assist, as required, in management of the Council's hostels, with guidance from the Business Manager.

## **Generic Job Activities, Duties and Responsibilities**

35. To operate within a range of statutory law, guidance and best practice with due consideration given to the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and other relevant legislation.
36. To provide appropriate advice and assistance, in respect of all tenures, to persons presenting to the section on matters which include, but is not limited to, housing options and general advice, tenancy and rights of occupation, benefits and basic debt assistance.
37. To interview persons regarding housing and homelessness issues at Council offices within the District, on a home visit or other appropriate place.

38. To maintain comprehensive and up to date electronic case files which include actions taken, PHP's and decisions made. This information must be sufficient to meet any reporting requirements such as the quarterly returns to DCLG.
39. To attend court on homelessness matters, as required. This includes, but is not limited to, representing a client, carrying out relevant investigations and gathering information.
40. Ensure that any deadlines set by legislation or targeted by the Authority are kept and maintained.
41. Monitor and report on allocated budget spend for housing options including that for temporary accommodation.
42. Authorise purchases made by housing options purchase-card holders and orders made as part of the E-Financial system. The post holder is also a purchase-card holder and spend will be in accordance with the council's financial policy, authorisation of this spend is provided through the Business Manager.
43. The post holder is responsible for the holding and issuing of petty cash held by the department for usage in emergency homelessness cases and will prepare the signoff report at the end of each financial year.
44. Undertake Systems Administration and development duties to ensure that the back office housing management programme is up to date, remains fit for purpose and facilitates appropriate systems access for required users ensuring access safety is maintained, resetting passwords and creating new user accounts.
45. Assist with the implementation, maintenance and development of appropriate systems for maintaining and monitoring various functions of the service and schemes, such as, but not limited to, initial contacts, applications, rent deposit scheme, sanctuary scheme and prevention fund, ensuring efficient accountancy where applicable. Advise and implement any improvements following consultation with the Business Manager.
46. To actively participate in meetings and events as required, some of which will be outside standard working times.
47. To actively contribute to the production and implementation of the District Homelessness Strategy and other strategies, policies, procedures, protocols and projects as directed.
48. To be conversant with all relevant current and new legislation and practices, with particular regard to homelessness and illegal eviction/harassment, advising senior officers accordingly.

49. Maintain an up to date knowledge on the availability of housing in the local area to provide well-informed housing options advice.
50. To liaise with statutory and voluntary agencies to assist in the housing and well-being of homeless applicants.
51. Liaise with Registered Social Landlords regarding allocations, nominations and all relevant matters when required.

### **Miscellaneous**

52. Undertake the induction and training of any new or existing staff with guidance from the Business Manager when required.
  53. To actively contribute to the design and production of information for service users as required.
  54. To attend any training sessions as may be deemed necessary.
  55. To undertake the duties required for the Council's 24 hour on call service.
  56. Deliver an effective and appropriate service to all service users, fairly and without discrimination.
  57. To ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.
  58. As a term of your employment, you can be required to undertake such duties commensurate with your grade and/or hours of work, as may reasonably be required of you at your initial place of work or any other of the Authority's establishments
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### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

You will uphold the District Council's Health and Safety Policy and amendments made thereto by the District Council and comply with all relevant health and safety legislation.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Council is committed to the effective management of risk. It is the responsibility of all employees to carry out their duties and responsibilities with adequate regard for Risk Management, as outlined within the Council's Risk Management Strategy and Policy.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

The Council has a statutory obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. This responsibility sits with all those individuals who provide services on behalf of the Council, including all those who work with children, young people and families; those who manage staff within this work; staff who work with mothers, fathers, carers and other adults who have contact with children; staff who have both direct and indirect contact with children, including administration, support and back office staff; contractors; volunteers, community groups and the general public.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

You will ensure compliance with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Codes of Practice and all other policies and regulations.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

You will uphold Newark and Sherwood District Council's Equal Opportunities Policy in Service Delivery and Employment, thereby promoting a fair and quality service to all.

## **TRAINING**

You will keep under review your own development needs. Learning needs should be discussed and determined at your annual Performance Appraisal and you will be required to undertake training as identified and as appropriate, for the individual, or as required for effective performance of the duties of the post.

## **CORPORATE VALUES**

The post holder must embody the corporate values of the Council as an individual and in their work, and ensure that these values are embedded in the work of the Business Unit and the practices of all staff.

### **Newark and Sherwood District Council's Values;**

- Ambitious and forward thinking; focused on achieving the very best and always looking to improve and innovate.
- Caring and compassionate; sensitive to the different needs and circumstances of others; seeks to empower people to fulfil their potential.
- Commercial and business-like; careful and creative with resources; securing value for money.
- Professional and trustworthy; consistently delivering on promises; providing good quality and demonstrating integrity.
- Welcoming and responsive; approachable, open to feedback and challenge and swift to act.

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This Job Description represents a statement of the duties of the post but does not include all minor duties. It is inevitable that over time the nature of an individual job will change and existing duties may be lost or others gained without changing the general character of the duties or the level of responsibility entailed. As a result the Authority will expect this job description to be subject to revision.

The Council is committed to equal opportunities. As part of its policy it has been agreed that applicants wishing to work on a 'Job Share' basis will be considered on an individual basis. Since it is not possible for all posts to operate in this way, if you wish to enquire about 'Job Sharing' you should contact the Personnel Section in the first instance.

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Signature of Post holder ..... Date .....



**NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

**JOB TITLE:** Senior Housing Options Officer

**DATE:** September 2020

<b>FACTOR</b>	<b>ESSENTIAL OR DESIRABLE</b>	<b>METHOD OF ASSESSMENT</b>
<b>RELEVANT EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>Essential</b> – Previous experience of giving Housing Advice to the general public	Application form and interview
	<b>Essential</b> – At least 2 years relevant experience working in a housing management environment	Application form and interview
	<b>Essential</b> – Experience of dealing directly with people in distress and/or with physical and mental health impairments	Application form and interview
	<b>Essential</b> – Knowledge of Housing and Homelessness legislation	Application form and interview
	<b>Essential</b> – Experience of effectively supervising a team.	Application form and interview
	<b>Desirable</b> – Experience of preparing and presenting reports both written and verbal.	Application form and interview
	<b>Desirable</b> – Experience of information gathering and statistical techniques.	Application form and interview

<p><b>QUALIFICATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Essential</b> – Literate and numerate</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – Educated to HNC level (or equivalent) in Housing or related discipline. Member of, or working towards membership of the Chartered Institute of Housing.</p>	<p>Application form and Interview</p> <p>Application form and interview</p>
<p><b>VOCATIONAL TRAINING</b></p>	<p><b>Essential</b> – Previous experience of working within a customer orientated environment</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – Ability to use network based computer systems including Word and Excel software</p> <p><b>Desirable</b> – Previous experience of providing Systems Administration</p> <p><b>Desirable</b> – Customer care training</p>	<p>Application form and interview</p> <p>Application form and interview</p> <p>Application form and interview</p> <p>Application form and interview</p>
<p><b>JOB RELATED SKILLS</b></p>	<p><b>Essential</b> – Ability to work under pressure and meet critical targets under own initiative.</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – Professional and business-like approach to the needs and aspirations of clients and statutory agencies</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – Ability to work with minimal supervision and as part of a team and maintain high standards.</p>	<p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p>
<p><b>PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES</b></p>	<p><b>Essential</b> – Excellent communication skills</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – Well organised, able to prioritise personal and others workload and be highly motivated.</p>	<p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p>

	<p><b>Essential</b> – Ability to organise, arrange, contribute to and record meetings as required.</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – Ability to remain calm in difficult situations</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – A confidential, diplomatic and sensitive approach to the customer needs</p> <p><b>Desirable</b> – Presentation skills.</p>	<p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p>
<b>WORK CIRCUMSTANCE</b>	<p><b>Essential</b> – The post requires the individual to have regular access to a vehicle to enable them to travel within/outside the district to carry out their duties. Duties may include (but are not restricted to) attending meetings, different work locations, conducting site and other visits and transporting heavy/bulky equipment or materials for business purposes as and when required.</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – Able to attend work commitments and meetings outside normal office hours</p> <p><b>Essential</b> – must be prepared to provide emergency cover outside normal working hours on a rota basis</p>	<p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p>

N.B. The above specification defines the minimum essential requirements of the job, but the Council will have regard to the Disability Discrimination Act and will make "reasonable adjustments" to help applicants with a disability achieve these standards. Compliance with all the requirements of the job description and person specification does not guarantee an interview. It may be necessary to use additional criteria at the shortlisting stage.