Job Description

Post Title: Housing Options Advisor

Service: Housing Services

Grade: 4-5

Responsible To: Housing Options Team Leader

Job Summary:

To provide a professional, customer-focused housing advice service to people experiencing housing difficulties or at risk of homelessness. The postholder will manage a caseload of homelessness applications, assess applicants' housing and support needs, and take effective action to prevent or relieve homelessness in accordance with the Council's statutory duties.

Working with customers, landlords, partner agencies and other Council services, the postholder will help households retain their existing accommodation or access suitable alternative housing. The role will also support the Council's aim of reducing the use and cost of temporary accommodation through early intervention, effective case management and the exploration of all available housing options.

Main Activities:

1. To interview customers and carry out statutory assessments and enquiries into the applicant's housing circumstances, accommodation and support needs, in line with the Councils' statutory duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and relevant case law, whilst remaining empathetic to the needs of the customer.
2. To carry a caseload of homelessness prevention and relief cases and develop, update and review Personalised Housing Plans for customers. This Plan will ensure that the Council is taking reasonable steps to prevent or relieve homelessness or the threat of homelessness.
3. To advise clients on full range of options to solve their housing problem, including negotiating with private sector landlords helping to resolve rent arrears and loss of tenancies; conciliating between family members and friends to prevent exclusions; identifying suitable move-on options including support with accessing the private rented sector; supporting victims of domestic abuse to make their home secure or supporting them into fleeing their home; or supporting rough sleepers from the street through housing pathways.
4. To write and issue legally sound and robust statutory S184 homelessness decision letters, which are subject to statutory review proceedings and county court appeal.
5. To carry out income and expenditure assessments to access affordable housing options; the affordability for homelessness prevention loans; identifying any income maximisation opportunities or welfare benefit entitlement; and assisting with applications for discretionary housing payments.
6. To support the Council's strategic objective of reducing the expenditure on temporary accommodation by exploring all options for temporary accommodation arrangements and working with other teams and agencies to help customers move on to appropriate permanent housing.
7. To develop effective working relationships with colleagues both within Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and external partners, service users, landlords as well as voluntary and other housing organisations.

8. To be the team lead in specific areas such as domestic abuse, ex-offender, care leavers, mental health or substance misuse.
9. To participate in an out of hours on-call rota for homelessness approaches and households in temporary accommodation.
10. To assist as required in the Council's Emergency Plan, including working at rest centres outside of the normal working day.
11. To undertake other duties commensurate with the grade of post.
12. To have a good understanding of safeguarding obligations to children and vulnerable adults at risk and the Council's safeguarding Policy.
13. To be aware of and exercise personal and corporate responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act and other related matters.
14. To comply with all Council's policies, including those relating to ICT, Equal Opportunities and Safeguarding.

NB This job description is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the tasks and responsibilities of the post. In line with Service needs, some tasks may need to change and any changes will be made in consultation with the postholder.