

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Housing Options Officer		
Directorate	Housing General Fund		
Reporting to	Team Leader- Housing Options		
Grade	12		
Evaluation ref:	TR0188	Job ref:	Family
Role purpose			
To be responsible for the processing of a varied caseload of homeless applications (personalised housing plans, prevention duty, relief duty, main housing duty) across Somerset. Negotiation with landlords, relatives and key stakeholders to prevent or delay homelessness. To undertake homeless applications ensuring the local authority meets the agreed timescales, and make robust decisions. To respond promptly to enquiries from customers, MP's, Councillors, and the public on a range of housing matters to ensure an efficient, resilient and reliable service is provided taking account of relevant legislation, policies, and the procedures of the Council. To work closely with the temporary accommodation team to minimise applicants stay in temporary accommodation and find creative and sustainable solutions to homelessness.			
Accountabilities			
To work as part of the Councils' wider housing service to provide advice and process applications relating to a wide range of housing issues. Undertake negotiations and where appropriate agree spend to save funding to prevent and/or delay homelessness. Determine homeless decision considering relevant legislations, policies, and the procedures of the Council. Where appropriate carry out home visits to applicants threatened with homelessness. To provide professional support and guidance to colleagues, MP's and Councillors in matter relating to landlord/tenant law, the homelessness code of guidance, Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. At all times maintain a high level of customer service meeting performance standards having regard to key legislation, the homeless code of guidance and other appropriate policies. Progress all homeless applications (Part 7) under current legislation, having regard to the Homelessness Code of Guidance, making decisions on duty owed and notifying the applicant within target times, ensuring all relevant facts and information			

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have been considered and assessed against the appropriate legislation and legal framework. Assessing each case on its own merits and without judgement.

Attend and represent the Council at multi-agency meetings including MAPPA, and MARAC ensuring strict compliance with the protocols always maintaining confidentiality.

To work with a range of partners and agencies to prevent and reduce homelessness in the community, whilst promoting awareness of the issues faced by those threatened with homelessness.

Make appropriate referrals to commissioned services and partner agencies to support the applicant with a range of issues that may be associated with the homeless situation (e.g. debt advice drug/alcohol services, domestic abuse services, housing support services)

Work closely with the homeless applicant to develop a personalised housing plan, maintaining regular contact and updating the plan on a regular basis until homelessness is resolved.

Assist senior officers in preparing for court proceedings in relation to s202 reviews.

Maintain accurate and comprehensive records ensuring information is stored securely and appropriately.

Ensure appropriate use of Council funds and policies to prevent and/or delay homelessness.

Investigate and resolve complaints

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge		
Knowledge of Homelessness legislation. (Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002, Suitability Order 2012, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017).	✓	
Knowledge of options available to someone that is homeless or at risk of homelessness.	✓	
The allocation of social housing / housing register.	✓	
Knowledge of landlord and tenant law.	✓	
An understanding of the role of Adult services and Children's services within the community.		✓

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Knowledge of safeguarding procedures	✓	
Experience		
Experience of working within a local authority.	✓	
Experience of working with the public and vulnerable applicants.	✓	
Experience of managing a caseload with competing deadlines where detailed and complex investigations are required, working with precision and attention to detail	✓	
Experience of working with external agencies to prevent or delay homelessness	✓	
Experience of effective partnership working which has led to positive solutions.		✓
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications		
Relevant degree or CIH or similar qualification or significant experience of delivery of a housing advice and prevention lead homelessness service.	✓	
Membership of a professional body.		✓
Evidence of continuing development of professional and managerial skills, e.g. through training, qualification and/or experience.		✓
Skills		
Excellent communication skills using a range of techniques (listening, presentation, consultation, negotiation, influencing, persuasion) to ensure effective interaction with customers, colleagues, management, partners, suppliers and other stakeholders.	✓	
Ability to build and maintain effective working relationships with a range of colleagues, partners and contacts.	✓	
Good analysis and decision-making skills and ability to communicate these with others.	✓	
Ability to adapt, responding to change as required.	✓	
Ability to prioritise workload, manage time effectively and meet deadlines.	✓	
Good organisational and administrative skills.	✓	
Ability to establish and manage realistic applicant expectations.	✓	
Resourceful, solution focused and skilled in problem solving and overcoming barriers.	✓	
Ability to deal sensitively with a wide range and spectrum of people in varying circumstances	✓	

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Good IT skills including the use of Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook as well as case management systems.	✓	
Working Conditions		
Hybrid working between office and remote working. Occasional working outside of normal hours to support staff on duty, and/or to help deal with emergencies. Occasional travel across the county for service meetings, partner meetings, and attending temporary accommodation facilities. A DBS check is required for this role. This role will mainly be required to work during duty housing hours of 8.30am-5.30pm, but with some flexibility as per the Dynamic Working Strategy.		
Dimensions of the role		
Somerset Council has approximately 8,500 households that approach the council for help about a housing issue each year and receives approximately 4,000 Homeless applications per year. As of February 2024, there were 275 households in temporary accommodation. There are approximately 12,500 households on the Homefinder Somerset Choice Based lettings scheme. Each other holds a caseload ranging from 35 to 60. Attend or deputise for, as agreed with senior lead specialist, statutory inter-agency partnerships, such as MARAC, and MAPPA, on behalf of Somerset Council.		
Working Arrangements		
Somerset Council's dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position		
Corporate Accountabilities		

Date: