

Job Description



Job Title: Private Sector Housing Officer	Service Area: Private Sector Housing Standards
Division/Section: Inclusive Economy and Housing	Post Number: Evaluation Number:
Grade: PO4	Date last updated: July 2021

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We are committed to and champion equality and diversity in all aspects of employment with the London Borough of Newham. All employees are expected to understand and promote our Equality and Diversity Policy in the course of their work.

PROTECTING OUR STAFF AND SERVICES

Adherence to Health and Safety requirements and proper risk management is required from all employees in so far as is relevant to their role. All employees are expected to understand and promote good Health and Safety practices and manage risks appropriately.

Background

The London Borough of Newham has the largest private rented stock in England as a proportion of its overall housing stock and over half of Newham households (60,000) depend on a private landlord for their health, safety and welfare. At the same time the quality of the housing stock is poor, with 1 in 4 homes found to have hazards to health and many families are subject to overcrowding as they struggle with finding rent and the means to heat their homes on low incomes.

Alongside this massive expansion of the private rented sector (PRS) in Newham there are now over 17,000 private landlords, including a significant number of criminal landlords and many more that are lacking the basic knowledge and skills needed to manage residential property.

In response to these circumstances Newham became the first local authority to introduce borough wide private licensing of all private landlords in January 2013 and since that time has issued approximately 80,000 licences with the intention of raising housing standards across Newham and penalising landlords who fail to provide homes of suitable quality.

Not only is the service responsible for regulating and the strategic direction of the PRS in terms of meeting the needs of Newham residents, but it is also key player in underpinning the core

values and initiatives of the Council since its work directly impacts on the majority of Newham households.

In addition to the administrative and property licensing functions there is a strong regulatory theme and there are new corporate priorities including an empty homes project and contributing to the climate change agenda through innovative energy efficiency initiative. The service is also a major contributor to the Council's data warehouse and provides information and intelligence on housing to services across the Council.

The Council is focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for its Communities placing people at the heart of everything we do. All this is only achieved by significant cross disciplinary and partnership working both inside and outside the authority, including both statutory and non-statutory sectors for all aspects of the housing delivery function. This network includes amongst others Social Care Safeguarding, Council Tax and Benefits, Planning, the Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, HMRC, amongst others and this provides a number of additional social and financial benefits to the council.

Overall Purpose of Job

To use their housing and environmental health knowledge, along with creativity, to deliver advanced interventions to improve the lives of tenants and Newham residents, while remaining dedicated to the service and corporate objectives.

The Private Sector Housing Standards (PSHS) Service seeks continuous improvement of property conditions and protect the health, safety and welfare of tenants through robust regulation, high standard inspections and intelligent intervention.

Your role is to assist in the development and implementation of our strategy for protecting private renters across the borough while helping to tackle some the social, economic and environmental factors.

You will need to provide an excellent service to landlords, owners, occupiers and tenants in all tenures, using a range of intervention strategies, including enforcement, education and advice.

Job Context

The post holder reports to Team Leader or other Private Sector Housing Manager.

1. The post holder will be a member of a team of high performing officers and are expected to ensure they work efficiently and effectively, to continually monitor and meet their targets. They should work effectively with minimal supervision and provide a quality service and to effect change where required.
2. The post holder will be a flexible worker, which means they will be expected to work in various locations; remotely in the field, inspecting private properties that are in poor and unpleasant conditions. Although currently based at Newham Dockside, it

is required that they be able to work from various locations including any suitable designated office location or from home

3. The post holder will be expected to work with multi-agency partners both internally and externally from a variety of locations. Assist senior officers in the creation and maintenance of close working practices including participation in multi-agency and special casework meetings.
4. The post holder is expected to be a decision maker and work on their own initiative with minimal supervision. They must take responsibility for their actions and their outputs. They must also advise and assist lower skilled members of staff in the office, during site inspections and in the Courts/Tribunals.
5. The post holder is expected to liaise with legal professionals, and similar stakeholders, to make decisions and lead on their cases using their discretion in pressured environments e.g. Courts and Tribunals.
6. The post holder may be required to work at various locations within the borough and work outside of core hours e.g. starting early mornings (7am start). However, they will also be entitled to flexible work outside of the corporate core hours. Post holders placed in other teams may be required to early mornings, work in various locations late evenings, weekends and occasional public holidays on a regular basis in order to meet service requirements.
7. They will need to ensure they appropriately represent the Council using their specialist housing qualifications, experience and knowledge in a wide range of environments, from overcrowded houses with unsanitary conditions, in Courts, and Tribunals.
8. The post holder will be familiar with Council policy objectives and offering advice to residents, service users, external bodies and the Mayor and elected members.
9. They will have experience with organising and coordinating cross-service or multi-agency projects.
10. The post holder may be required to deputise as lead on either disrepair team, compliance team, multi-agency licensing operations or special projects.
11. The post holder will have some responsibility for financial matters including procurement, the authorisation of works in default and contract/project management of up to £10k. He/she will be expected to take appropriate action to maintain budgetary control for works in default activities.

Key Tasks and Accountabilities:

Key tasks and accountabilities are intended to be a guide to the range and level of work expected of the post holder. This is not an exhaustive list of all tasks that may fall to the post holder and employees will be expected to carry out such other reasonable duties, which may be required from time to time.

1. To inspect properties in poor, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in various locations, and early in the morning, late at night and at weekends. To work proactively, often alone and with limited supervision.
2. To gather quality evidence under guidelines such as the Police & Criminal Evidence Act. Prepare legal case files for the purposes of civil proceedings and criminal proceedings in courts and tribunals including prosecutions. Liaise with barristers and legal professionals and make decisions on their cases using discretion within the Council's policies.
3. Use their housing and environmental health knowledge to make sound and complex decisions in relation to high-risk technical and legal matters so they achieve the tactical and strategic outcomes of the council. For example, using creativity to gather hard to obtain evidence within the bounds of PACE. Applying the public interest tests and deciding to prosecute a criminal landlord. Giving evidence and being cross-examined as a Council witness in high profile cases.
4. Use their housing and Council operational policy knowledge to assist in the formulation and implementation of operational policies, guidance and initiatives and to work with related departments in the creation of these policies.
5. To assist and deputise for Senior Officers on a regular basis on a range of complex and contentious issues where persuasion and advocacy is required.
6. May supervise up to 2 officers and ensure targets are met and share in leading in key policy areas or projects, to ensure that various technical functions and associated work are performed effectively. They should use their creativity to devise new ways of working where the situation demands e.g. new information search techniques.
7. Assess and help in the development of Officers and contribute their knowledge use their creativity and share initiatives including training programmes, mentoring, coaching and provide day-to-day technical support for their team.
8. To assist with procurement activity and authorising payments in relation to the delivery of statutory activities and other private sector housing services.
9. To use technical and other data to ensure the service operates to a high degree of productivity and efficiency.

10. To understand the use of the appropriate IT systems for business improvement and promote data quality and integrity at all times.
11. To investigate and take the appropriate action, in accordance with council policies, in relation to service requests and complaints about the service concerning technical or legal housing matters.
12. To take responsibility and participate in enforcement inspections and operations to ensure that they are carried out safely and effectively, often in the presence of Police and/or other agencies. Ensure legal enforcement cases are driven forward and are brought to a satisfactory conclusion.
13. To pro-actively make their own enforcement decisions, in line with council policies and procedures.
14. To help recover Financial Penalties and other orders by using and managing effective recovery mechanisms, including liaising with Finance, Legal and other Departments. In addition, explore and use new, innovative solutions to aid recovery.
15. To prepare complex legal cases using their training and qualifications to gather and give evidence to a high standard in civil and criminal proceedings in Courts and Tribunals on behalf of Council.
16. To act as the authority's expert in matters of private sector housing law and administration using their knowledge, experience and qualifications and to support colleagues involved in similar activities.
17. To assist in the preparation of the annual service planning process, council policy and the formulation of performance indicators and measurement of outputs.
18. To assist in preparing and presenting accurate written and/or verbal reports, briefings and presentations directly to senior managers, the Mayor, Cabinet and other bodies and to attend meetings as necessary or required.
19. To be flexible, able to cover more than one service area at any time and take on new duties and responsibilities. To cover the work of other officers as necessary in times of leave, sickness or other absenteeism.
20. To participate in the recruitment and selection of staff, including temporary staff and consultants.
21. To maintain relationships with partners and stakeholders particularly landlords and tenant groups to ensure the delivery of key outputs and performance indicators. Use persuasion and advocacy techniques to ensure that satisfactory outcomes are achieved.

22. To give high levels of customer care and recognise the service needs of clients with complex needs, ensure the delivery of high quality customer service including responding to MP/Councillor enquiries and FOI requests.
23. To ensure that adequate records and databases are maintained including statutory registers to enable the efficient operation of the work of the Team and assist with the timely production of information and performance indicators.
24. To comply with Data Protection and Freedom of Information Act legislation and associated regulations and guidance.

Personal Specification



Job Title: Private Sector Housing Officer	Service Area: Private Sector Housing Standards
Directorate Inclusive Economy & Housing	Job Number: Evaluation Number:
Grade: PO4	Date last updated: July 2021

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

The criteria listed in this Person Specification are all essential to the job. Where the Method of Assessment is stated to be the Application Form, your application needs to demonstrate clearly and concisely how you meet each of the criteria, even if other methods of assessment are also shown. If you do not address these criteria fully, or if we do not consider that you meet them, you will not be shortlisted. Please give specific examples wherever possible.

CRITERIA	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY We are committed to and champion equality and diversity in all aspects of employment with the London Borough of Newham. All employees are expected to understand and promote our Equality and Diversity Policy in the course of their work.	
PROTECTING OUR STAFF AND SERVICES Adherence to Health and Safety requirements and proper risk management is required from all employees in so far as is relevant to their role. All employees are expected to understand and promote good Health and Safety practices and manage risks appropriately.	

<p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good knowledge of private sector housing and property licensing within the local government framework. Including, the enforcement and regulatory functions, of the Housing Acts, Public Health, landlord and tenant law and the application of all other relevant legal and practical principles. Undertake complex interventions in a specialised environment. 2. Knowledge of developments in the field of housing and health and of the sociological, demographic and geographical demands and constraints of inner city Boroughs. 3. Some level of knowledge and experience of PACE, conducting interviews under caution, preparing evidence and obtaining warrants. 4. An understanding of the application of the techniques of risk assessment in the area of housing, health and the environment. 5. Knowledge of developments in the field of housing and health and of the sociological, demographic and geographical demands and constraints of inner city Boroughs. 6. Understanding of construction technology, surveying techniques and schedules of work. 	<p>Application form/Interview/Test</p> <p>Application form/Interview/Test</p> <p>Application form / Interview</p> <p>Application form</p> <p>Application form</p> <p>Application form</p>
<p>QUALIFICATIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. BSc (Hons) or MSc Environmental Health or a similar degree/vocational qualification in a related field. 8. CIEH/Warwick Uni Certificate in Understanding and Applying the HHSRS (2 day Course) or equivalent. 	

EXPERIENCE:	
9. Experience of taking on housing enforcement cases.	Application form/Interview
10. Experience of inspecting properties in poor, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in various locations, early in the morning, later at night and at weekends. To work proactively, often alone and with no supervision.	Application form/Interview/Test
11. Experience of giving advice on the rights and responsibilities of owners and occupiers, often in difficult and hostile situations.	Application form/Interview
12. Ability to prepare reports, briefings and presentations for other officers and senior managers.	Application form/Interview/Test
13. Experience of the main functions of a local authority public health and housing functions.	Application form/Interview/Test
14. A good level of understanding and experience of construction technology, surveying techniques and extensive investigations on a variety of dwellings, including complex HMOs. Preparing schedules of work and applying and using risk assessment.	Application form/Interview/Test
15. Experience of some aspects of private sector housing and/or property licensing work, including demonstrable experience of having taken enforcement work. Using a broad range of enforcement options under the Housing Act 2004, Housing and Planning Act 2016, Public Health Acts, Statutory Nuisance legislation and other principal acts and statutory guidance.	
16. Good level of competency to prepare and serve legal notices, legal agreements, prepare legal briefs, instruct counsel and pursue resultant legal action including giving evidence in court or tribunal, for prosecutions/hearings. To organise W.I.D and/or seek financial recovery.	
17. Ability to build and maintain effective and productive working relationships with service users, colleagues and partners at all levels.	
18. Experience of organising and coordinating high risk or high profile cross-service or multi-agency projects and/or procurement activities.	

<p>19. Experience and commitment to delivering an effective, improving and high quality service.</p> <p>20. Experience in dealing with a wide range of private sector housing functions and for the improvement of the service.</p> <p>21. Ability and experience in taking effective interventions, making sound technical judgements and follow through to a satisfactory conclusion.</p>	
---	--

SKILLS AND ABILITIES:	
20. Ability to be flexible and ensure flexibility within your team and deputising as a senior by attending inspections and operations out of hours (weekends, early mornings and late at night) in multiple properties in poor, overcrowding and unsanitary conditions	Application form/Interview
21. Ability to work safely in poor environments and with various internal and external partners (e.g. Police, Immigration, HMRC, other LA's, etc.) with no supervision.	Application form/Interview
22. Ensure knowledge is proactively shared.	
23. Willingness and ability to be flexible undertake new tasks, take responsibility, and make well-informed decisions on behalf of the service.	Application form/Interview
24. Able to communicate with staff in a clear and unambiguous way.	Application form/Interview/Test
25. You will be an excellent communicator (both verbal and written) and will be adept at providing excellent customer care and communication skills in explaining complex and technical issues accurately, clearly and concisely both orally and in writing when dealing with all service users.	Application form/Interview
26. Ability to promote and defend the team's work publically, to ensure the positive, high media profile of the department.	Application form/Interview
27. Have a high degree of literacy and numeracy skills, with appropriate application to the business.	Application form/Interview
28. Ability to analyse, filter and use data and to interpret electronic information accurately.	Application form/Interview

<p>29. Ability to use their creativity to devise new ways of working where the situation demands it e.g. during criminal investigations.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview</p>
<p>30. Able to assist in the effective delivery of tasks and services for internal and external customers.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview</p>
<p>31. Ability to take charge, when required, and make creative time sensitive decisions in pressured environments in the absence of a senior officer such as liaising with Barristers, legal professionals and making decisions on their cases using their discretion.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview Application form/Interview</p>
<p>32. Ability to support and assist colleagues in resolving cases, including participating in joint visits in multiple locations.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview</p>
<p>33. Ability to identify their own development needs.</p>	
<p>34. Ability to manage their own workload to ensure performance targets of the service are met and cases are progressed to conclusion using new, innovative solutions e.g. recovering fines issued from financial penalty notices.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview</p>
<p>35. Ability to make and implement operational decisions on their cases in absence of a senior officer, within the team's procedures.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview Application form/Interview</p>
<p>36. Ability to assist with implementing change and supporting the management team in delivering quality outputs.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview</p>
<p>37. Ability to assist with the development and delivery of projects for the team.</p>	

PERSONAL STYLE AND BEHAVIOUR:	
38. Supports their team and seeks guidance and clarification from senior officers when needed.	Application form/Interview
39. Motivate colleagues to improve team working	Application form/Interview
40. Effective and professional interpersonal skills with excellent communication ability with regards to service users, other officers and external partners, especially whilst engaging them in difficult or contradictory circumstances and/or in poor, overcrowded environments.	Application form/Interview
41. Inspires others to deliver high standards of customer service and by leading by example.	
42. Is enthusiastic about PSH work and has a problem-solving attitude, which influences and motivates others.	
43. A champion of a learning culture with an understanding of different learning styles.	
44. Proactively share knowledge and skills.	
45. Promotes, investigates and uses new technology and new ways of working to meet the requirements of the service.	
46. Promotes supports and encourages a focus on outputs rather than attendance within their team and service.	

OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:	
<p>47. The post holder will be required to work at various locations starting early mornings (7am start), or late evenings, weekends and occasional public holidays on a regular basis in order to meet service requirements. These locations will be in poor, overcrowded and unsanitary condition.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview</p>
<p>48. If the post holder chooses to use their own car to carry out visits/inspections then they must have a full current driving licence, ensure that their own vehicle is safe to drive, MOT'd, taxed and insured for business use.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview/Test</p>
<p>49. This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check.</p>	<p>Application form/Interview/Test</p>
<p>50. This post is exempt from The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974).</p>	