

Job Description

Job Title: Quality Assurance Officer	Service Area: Homelessness Prevention & Advice	
Directorate: Inclusive Economy & Housing	Post Number:	Evaluation Number: 5736
Grade: PO1	Date last updated: May 2022	

People at the heart of everything we do

We are committed to putting people – Newham residents and Council staff – at the heart of all we do. Our approach is a collaborative joint enterprise between residents, the Mayor, Members, Council staff and the Corporate Management Team.

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.

Corporate parent

We believe that every member of staff working for Newham Council should understand and fulfil our corporate parenting responsibilities for our looked after children that we have under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Overall Purpose of Job

To ensure the Homelessness Prevention & Advice Service (HPAS) is making good, timely and robust decisions in relation to the local authority's statutory housing duties (eg Housing Act 1996 (as amended); Homelessness Reduction Act 2017; Equality Act 2010; Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)(England) Order 2012), in line with best practice and caselaw.

To draw upon most current caselaw (national) as well as case audit reviews, decision letters, complaints and member enquiries (internal) to create and deliver a comprehensive training programme for HPAS. In turn this will reduce legal challenge as well as helping to build a culture of continual learning and service improvement.

To maintain high levels of good customer care and empathy throughout. We may not always be able to give people what they want, but we should always be honest and treat them with respect, in consideration of their situation.

Job Summary

In effect, the role is to provide training and development to Housing Advisers who undertake homelessness assessments under Part VII Housing Act 1996 (as amended). In order to achieve this, the postholder must maintain a comprehensive knowledge of caselaw (as this is determined by the Courts), changes in legislation and Codes of Guidance, and best practice across the sector. To further support a culture of continual learning and service improvement, evidence of training need will be pulled from undertaking regular audits of both open and closed cases and assessment of complaints, member enquiries and Ombudsman investigations; and the quality of case management practice, quality notes and decisions, and adherence to statutory timescales. This analysis will create a cyclical training programme to be developed and delivered by the postholder.

The postholder will have a major input into the design and operational practice of the Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service.

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 ensure HPAS provides an effective, customer-friendly service to residents, who may be vulnerable or have multiple complex needs, by ensuring Housing Officers carrying out technical Part VII 'homeless applications' are applying the legislation correctly, in accordance with the relevant caselaw and Codes of Guidance
2. To manage and carry out a continuous cycle of case audits, both open and closed, based on a percentage agreed each month. In doing so, the postholder will need to have an excellent technical understanding of the relevant legislation and good case management practice, as well as Codes of Guidance and maintain an up-to date knowledge of how policies and procedures need to adapt in the light of new caselaw.
3. To draw upon evidence obtained through case audits, complaints, member enquiries, Ombudsman investigations, etc to develop and deliver bespoke internal training, targeted at case officers, with the intention of improving decision making, quality of case management and customer service.
4. To provide regular reports to managers, based on the analysis of case audits, and ensure appropriate measures are in place to track the effective implementation of proposed case management improvements.
5. To ensure that systems used to manage and track cases, are being used effectively and in line with the objectives of the service in preventing homelessness and increasing access to suitable options. To make recommendations of necessary changes in order to reflect new ways of working, service improvement or adapt practice in light of emerging caselaw.
6. To ensure clients' housing requirements in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Housing Act 1996 (as amended), Equality Act 2010, Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012), and all other relevant legislation, are being correctly assessed. To make sure effective and robust practice in place to reduce the risk of legal challenge, and where challenged, the Council has achieved a defensible position, whilst progressing the wider objectives of the service.
7. To assess cases on the day where duty has been discharged (eg following the refusal of a suitable offer), and issue the appropriate Discharge of Duty Notification.
8. To review statutory S184 decision letters, letters of referral to other authorities where an applicant's local connection lies elsewhere, and where necessary create new templates for case officers to work from.
9. To ensure case management practice reflects the specific circumstances of vulnerable and multiple complex needs of both families and individuals, leading to policy and practice which can be tailored to address these needs and circumstances.

10. To carry out detailed enquiries on cases subject to statutory review proceedings as directed by Team Leaders or Senior Managers.
11. To comply with all relevant statutory requirements, Government Guidance and Codes of conduct, Newham policies and procedures, professional and performance standards and good housing and homelessness prevention practice.
12. To ensure full and accurate records of all clients, all advice and support provided. To maintain accurate written and computer records, reports, & other monitoring information as required in connection with the various duties and case management.
13. To assist in developing full range of information and publicity for all clients as well as internal procedures. To understand the value of information to the council and to contribute to good information governance by keeping information safe, accurate and up to date and available to those who need it. The post holder is required to abide by the council's information governance policies.
14. To provide advice services to clients through personal, online or telephone interviews; correspondence, advocacy, reception, home visiting, outreach work, on behalf of the Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service.
15. Where required, to undertake affordability and suitability assessments (as per Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012)), and in the process, develop working practices which can be delivered across the team and across other related services.
16. To deal with enquiries, complaints and correspondence from clients and their advocates, including solicitors, councillors, MPs, the ombudsman and other housing providers, in line with the Council's complaints and enquiries procedure. This may include preparing information to support court cases for which the post-holder is responsible.

To undertake all responsibilities listed below:

17. To be a champion for excellent customer service delivery and customer care and contribute to the development and delivery of an integrated service.
18. To be self-serving with respect to administration, case record keeping and other related duties and utilise IT systems to update and record information required according to guidance and established procedures.
19. To participate in appraisals, one to ones, objective settings, personal development plans and working group meetings and take a full and active role in service development, including service reviews.
20. To carry out the duties of the post in accordance with the Data Protection Act, the Health & Safety at Work Act and other relevant legislation, as well as Council policies, procedures, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
21. To carry out the duties of this post with due regard to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and to actively promote and uphold the Council's HEART values.
22. To take responsibility, appropriate to the post, for ensuring compliance with council policies and procedures aimed at promoting and safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable children and adults.
23. To take responsibility, appropriate to the post for promoting diversity including tackling racism and good race, ethnic & community relations.
24. To undertake any other duties appropriate to the grade, that may be required. These may be varied from time to time to meet the needs of the service.

Personal Specification

Job Title: Quality Assurance Officer	Service Area: Homelessness Prevention & Advice	
Directorate: Inclusive Economy & Housing	Post Number:	Evaluation Number: 5736
Grade: PO1	Date last updated: January 2022	

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.

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.

CRITERIA- Essential	Desirable	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
<p>KNOWLEDGE: An extensive knowledge of the relevant legislation relating to housing and homelessness, Codes of Guidance</p> <p>Demonstrable knowledge of recent caselaw and the impact this has on a homelessness prevention service</p> <p>Understanding of the housing issues facing a high demand London local authority.</p> <p>Excellent knowledge of good case management practice</p>		<p>Application, Test and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p>
<p>EDUCATION/QUALIFICATIONS Educated to degree level standard or equivalent or demonstrable suitable experience</p>		Application

<p>SKILLS, ABILITIES & EXPERIENCE: Experience of dealing with a diverse and vulnerable clientele</p> <p>Experience of working in a service within a pressurised and high profile environment within a multi-disciplinary team, providing a quality service.</p> <p>Experience of taking an evidence based approach, with the objective of making service improvements.</p> <p>Understanding the principles of a prevention and options approach in tackling the issue of homelessness and of coaching and helping staff to use negotiation tools in an advice or advocacy setting.</p> <p>Experience of providing quality advice and information to members of the public and of handling complaints and enquiries</p> <p>Understanding of the skills required to develop and deliver training on a complex subject matter, ensuring that the content of the training is fully understood and implemented</p> <p>Experience of using different IT systems in order to manage caseloads, monitor delivery of targets and drive improved service.</p>		<p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Test</p> <p>Application and Test</p> <p>Application and Test</p>
<p>PERSONAL STYLE AND BEHAVIOUR: <u>Focuses on People:</u> Excellent interpersonal skills including active listening, advocacy and a win-win approach with all stakeholders</p> <p><u>Takes Ownership:</u> Proactive in seizing opportunities and takes responsibility for ensuring the best possible outcome for clients</p> <p><u>Works Collaboratively:</u> Ability to gain, and retain, the confidence and respect of staff, service users and other contacts.</p> <p><u>Communicates Effectively:</u> Excellent communication skills both verbally and in writing, including the ability to produce detailed technical letters and reports.</p> <p><u>Focuses on Results:</u> Ability to gather information and interpret complex issues e.g. legislation and case law quickly, to think creatively about problems and identify solutions.</p> <p><u>Coaching and development:</u> Ability to identify people's strengths and weaknesses and create a supportive environment whereby staff are able to fulfil their potential</p>		<p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application, Test and Interview</p> <p>Application, Test and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p>

<p><u>Calmness under pressure:</u> Ability to thrive in a challenging and pressurised environment, with competing service demands and tight deadlines</p> <p><u>Self-starter:</u> Ability to work unsupervised, prioritise workloads and achieve targets and deadlines.</p> <p><u>Respects and understands individual's needs:</u> Ability to work effectively and even-handedly with people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances, ensuring there are practices in place to reflect this.</p>		<p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p> <p>Application and Interview</p>
<p>OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Willing to work outside normal working hours to respond to emergencies or attend meetings as required.</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of the issues relating to equal opportunities in service delivery and provision and to actively promote ways of eradicating racism, sexism and other forms of negative discrimination through the Council's policies and procedures.</p> <p>To comply with the Council's Health & Safety Policies.</p>		<p>Application</p> <p>Application</p> <p>Application</p>