

## Emergency Housing Officer

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|--------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Reports to:</b> | Emergency Placements and Incomes Manager    |                                |     |
| <b>Department:</b> | Partnerships, Housing and Resident Services | <b>Grade:</b>                  | S02 |
| <b>DBS Status:</b> | Basic                                       | <b>Politically restricted:</b> | No  |

### Job Purpose:

The Emergency Housing Officer deals with the day-to-day supply of emergency accommodation as well as the placement of households in urgent housing need into emergency accommodation. The officer will also be responsible for verification of occupancy of emergency units, cancellation and movement of households within available units to achieve best use of nightly paid accommodation. The team works closely with the housing benefits service to ensure maximum take-up of benefits to households placed in hotels, hostels and other emergency accommodation schemes.

A key part of the role involves working closely with landlords and accommodation providers to maintain strong, professional relationships that support the smooth delivery of emergency housing services. The post holder is also responsible for ensuring that all landlord invoices are processed accurately and in a timely manner, in accordance with council procedures and financial controls.

### Values

Collaborate proactively.  
Lead inclusively.  
Embrace change.  
Be bold and curious.  
Celebrate and share our success.

### Job specific roles and responsibilities

1. To make appropriate bookings and allocations to hotels, hostels and other emergency accommodation. The post-holder will select suitable households against agreed allocation criteria and taking into account particular medical, vulnerable and area restrictions.
2. To ensure that all bookings and allocations are made within agreed timescales and budgets, including same-day placements for emergency cases, and to assess affordability when considering clients for emergency accommodation. Ensuring that families do not remain in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer than six weeks.
3. To actively liaise with providers and managing agents where accommodation-related problems are identified to ensure that actions are taken to resolve any issues raised

- and transfer tenants into more suitable accommodation in line with their individual needs.
4. To undertake special or ad hoc accommodation-related projects, including tenancy audits, delivery of decant schemes and support work on new contract development, as required by the Housing Options Service Manager, Homelessness Prevention and Relief Team Leader and the Housing Resolutions Team Leader/Manager.
  5. To ensure a responsive and effective service to homeless households in need of emergency housing, including effective and 8 step processing of new bookings, as well as accurate advice on charges payable and housing benefit. This includes making provisional calculations of housing benefit (HB) for working clients, pending HB assessment.
  6. To notify the out of hours team of any hotel vacancies and routinely provide information on households that may approach them.
  7. To investigate cases of unacceptable behaviour in accommodation and take appropriate action. This could include considering a transfer or advising the Housing Officer of potential discharge of duty.
  8. To develop and maintain a positive relationship with customers, tenants, resident organisations, other housing providers, council officers, contractors, elected members and other agencies to ensure high quality service standards are maintained.
  9. To contact providers on a daily basis in regard to vacancies required for family size requirements within London, and outside London for our daily Service Needs and to notify of any terminations on the day.
  10. Create properties on the Council's IT systems for all schemes, ensuring that property details are accurate and complete.
  11. To create and maintain placements, tenancies and rent accounts for all homeless households booked into hotels, hostels or other emergency accommodation schemes.
  12. To terminate placements, tenancies and rent accounts when clients have moved out of their current accommodation or have moved to more suitable accommodation in the Private Rented Sector or Permanent Accommodation.
  13. To ensure that the property of homeless households is moved, stored delivered or disposed of in accordance with the Council's furniture storage policy and statutory requirements. To set up and monitor charge accounts for those using the service and take appropriate action to recover arrears.
  14. To verify clients/tenants in hotel and emergency accommodation in regards to rent collection and rent arrears for teams in Accommodation Services to make decisions on their move on accommodation.
  15. To set up Rental Agreements and Standing Orders to maximise income collection in line with targets and the Arrears Escalation policy, offering housing benefit and debt counselling advice as necessary and referring suspended HB claims on a daily basis and following through on HB claims until re-instated.
  16. To manage, calculate and process the direct expenditure payments of all credit refunds to both current and former tenants through full audits of the rent account against benefit entitlement within target times and ensuring clients/tenants are informed.

17. To comply with procedures for terminating accommodation where customers refuse to pay monies owed. This includes issuing instructions and providing paperwork to start possession proceedings and providing Legal Services with information necessary to obtain a successful eviction.
18. To prepare timely paperwork and rent reports on arrears cases where customers are not paying their rent arrears and notify Team Leaders of the potential need for an intentionality investigation.
19. To manage the Social Service placements and rent accounts as per the Service level agreement with Social Services. To recharge Social Services on a quarterly basis with the various charges depending on whether the client is eligible for Housing Benefit or not. To monitor these placements/bookings authorised by the Team Leaders and Officers via e-mails and the daily placement sheets.
20. To manage Housing Management tenants booked into hotels on emergency accommodation. To monitor these placements/bookings authorised by an appropriate Team Leader.
21. Ad hoc placements from various sections in Adult Social Care to be dealt with as per above.
22. To deal with enquiries and complaints and correspondence from clients and their professional advocates, including solicitors, councillors, MPs, the ombudsman and other housing providers, in line with the Council's complaints and enquiries procedure.
23. To maintain accurate written and computer records, reports, & other monitoring information as required in connection with the various duties undertaken and keep other records necessary to provide an adequate management information data base.
24. To process weekly reports from IT Systems and IT Databases for meeting targets and service delivery.
25. To identify cases of fraud and misrepresentation to the Audit and Investigations Team and take appropriate action.
26. To participate in projects, working groups, service developments, testing, reviews and audits within Housing Needs Service and Council wide and contributing towards the continuous review and improvement of performance and customer care standards.
27. To understand, and keep abreast of, legislation and national and local policy relating to the supply and use of temporary accommodation, including housing benefit legislation.
28. To assist in the induction, complete full training of the job and supervision of new staff whilst carrying out your normal role and other members of staff and sharing knowledge, learning and experience with colleagues across the division on our relevant work areas.
29. To follow up on disrepair issues with property providers, ensure repairs are carried out within ample time & where necessary, move the applicant into alternative accommodation and complete the full booking process again.  
Complete the monthly IBAA monitoring reports and send back to Central Government.

30. To complete and issue the Section 188 interim discharge letter for all relevant cases and to ensure that all refusals of emergency accommodation are thoroughly investigated.
31. To check that invoices have been receipted correctly by cross-referencing internal systems. Resolve any discrepancies where possible and liaise with relevant teams to ensure accurate payment processing in line with Council procedures.
32. Ensure that providers are part of the Setting the Standard inspection service; Monitoring and checking that our eligible providers are registered on the scheme.
33. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all employees are required to act in such a way that at all times safeguards the health and well-being of children and vulnerable adults.
34. Carry out duties with due regard to the Council's Customer Care, Equal Opportunities, Information Governance, Data Protection, Health and Safety and Emergency Planning & Awareness (including to provide assistance where available) policies and procedures.
35. Employees should embed environmental sustainability into their work, actively contributing to Brent becoming a carbon-neutral borough in 2030.
36. Undertake any other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of this post.

## **Essential Requirements (key skills & qualifications)**

### **Knowledge and Qualifications**

- Educated to high standards of numeracy and literacy
- Strong digital literacy skills to navigate housing systems, manage records, and communicate effectively.
- Understanding of Housing Benefit regulations, welfare reform and affordability of accommodation provided under homelessness legislation
- Understanding of homelessness and housing issues in the borough

### **Experience**

- Experience of giving advice and information to vulnerable customers and working in a busy front line customer focused environment.
- Strong and effective experience in provision of exceptional customer services.
- Worked with households experiencing a housing crisis and the provision of advice and assistance covering a range of aspects of that crisis.
- Experience of negotiation/advocacy/mediation.
- Experience of managing service user expectations in a fast pacedfast-paced environment.

### **Skills and Abilities**

- Ability to analyse and draw conclusions from financial and other information and to communicate issues clearly in writing and in person.

- Ability to change and suggest improvements to systems or working methods to improve performance
- Ability to build and maintain effective working relations with customers, colleagues and other internal and external services.
- Ability to organise own workload and prioritise competing demands.
- IT literate, including use of word processing, spreadsheets, databases and e-communication.
- Ability to deal with difficult customers and maintain positive working relations.
- Commitment to motivating and empowering people to succeed and providing excellent customer service
- Ability to maintain high levels of motivation and demonstrate flexibility when things don't go according to plan
- Demonstrate commitment to and comfort with the Council's equalities and diversity policy through all aspects of service delivery.
- Ability to work effectively in a fast-paced, front-line environment and remain calm and focused under pressure.

**Budget Responsibility and Overall Headcount**

*Within reason these key deliverables may evolve to meet service need and it is expected that the postholder will be flexible and adaptable in their delivery to meet both service and council wide needs*