Job Description

Job Title:	Homelessness Prevention and Relief Officer		
Reports to:	Homelessness Prevention and Relief Team Leader		
Directly accountable for:	None		
Reporting Department:	Housing Needs Service	**Grade:**	S02
Department:	Resident Services	**Driving required:**	No
DBS Status:	Basic	**Politically restricted:**	No

Job Purpose:

To be responsible for the effective delivery of the Council's duty to prevent and relieve homelessness for households who approach the Council in housing need. This will involve assisting homeless households to avoid the experience of temporary accommodation by engaging with all necessary parties including landlords and other excluders to stop the loss of their current accommodation followed by a planned move to the Private Rented Sector where appropriate.

The postholder will seek to empower households to find their own solution to their housing crises, and particularly engaging individuals/households in the borough experiencing a housing crisis and managing their expectations in relation to the private rented property market in order to make the decision for themselves/their family, avoiding a placement in Temporary Accommodation for households receiving timely assistance in relation to their housing crisis.

Providing tenancy support for the families placed in private rented sector (PRS) accommodation to ensure sustainability of such tenancies by providing practical advice, information and support on a wide range of issues including housing, welfare rights, and the promotion of personal independence and helping clients to find long term settled accommodation.

Negotiating and mediating with landlords and excluders to agree new tenancies/licences as well as extensions to existing tenancies and licences.

Brent Values

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

Job specific roles and responsibilities

1. Housing Options Prevention and Relief Officers will deliver intensive, specialist support to homeless clients. This will include:
2. Managing a caseload of people who are currently experiencing a housing crisis, and provide a service that seeks to minimise the duration of that crisis;
3. Understanding the complex, multiple needs as well as strengths of those individuals; and develop trusting, non-dependent relationships to improve their confidence and motivation to progress towards their next step in housing
4. Empowering individuals to find their own solution to their housing crisis, drawing on the assistance provided by the Housing Options Team.

5. Create individual Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) for everyone in housing need to sustain existing accommodation and/or find new housing, taking account of their personal circumstances and keep the plan under review.
6. Carry out all agreed actions in the PHP that the Council is to take in a timely manner and update the plans promptly.
7. Helping people to understand the rented housing market, keeping up-to-date with Local Housing Allowance, benefit changes, and opportunities;
8. Providing some support for individuals through the resettlement process when moving to a new home;
9. Helping tenants with preparing defence forms for section 21 and other relevant court proceedings.
10. Ensuring all applicants who approach the Council in housing need are supported to sustain their tenancies and to resolve the threat of homelessness and to secure suitable and affordable accommodation based on their vulnerability and needs.
11. Facilitating the relationship between tenants and landlords/agents, secure the letting and ensure that Housing Benefit / Universal Credit is in place.
12. Achieving and exceeding challenging, individual and team targets to achieve measurable outcomes.
13. Attending court where necessary and appropriate to support tenants with a defence against claims by their landlords.
14. Delivering the Housing Needs Out of Hours Service on a rota basis as required.
15. Interviewing all applicants who approach the Council in housing need, to determine what actions can be taken to resolve any threat of homelessness, to secure their continued occupation of their current accommodation. If this is not possible, or appropriate, to explore what other options are available to them to prevent them from becoming homeless.
16. Conducting home visits to appropriate locations both inside and outside of the borough, as and when is necessary, to assist in the investigation of households circumstances. This could be achieved through some use of public transport, however it is desirable that the postholder has access to some form of their own transport.
17. Having good understanding of the issues affecting affordability of housing including accurate understanding of benefits, benefit tapers, welfare reforms (current and proposed), and geography.
18. Maintaining a detailed knowledge of homelessness legislation, case law and government guidance concerning the Council's statutory duties and maintain a working knowledge of related housing, property, immigration and family legislation.
19. Maintaining up to date knowledge of the different housing options available to service users seeking accommodation and systems of access to housing of all types including; the private rented sector, intermediate housing schemes, and hostels.
20. Maintaining 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.
21. Conducting outreach work aimed at promoting the work of the Housing Needs Service, preventing future homelessness and promoting alternatives to social housing, as required.
22. Organising and administering a case load, identifying priorities and deadlines and ensuring systematic progress is made on each case.
23. Carrying out a statutory assessment of homelessness dictated by legislation including eligibility, homelessness, local connection, priority need and intentional homelessness to determine what duties are owed to those in housing need.
24. Writing and issuing notification letters, outcome of interview letters, including statutory S184 decision letters, statutory response to requests for accommodation pending review (a.k.a. Mohammed letters), letters of referral to other authorities where an applicant's local connection lies elsewhere, and outcome letters, to advise the applicant of the outcome of their initial interview.

25. Making all necessary referrals to relevant services or departments, including the Council's medical officer, social care services and other relevant departments, and investigate high need or exceptional cases. This may include preparing reports for the allocations and social panels where required.
26. Dealing 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.
27. Undertaking project work around new initiatives and priorities that the Council or Government may develop, including targeted housing support, special viewings or lettings schemes and research on housing needs.
28. Developing 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.
29. Carrying out duties with due regard to the Council's Customer Care, Equal Opportunities, Information Governance, Data Protection and Health and Safety policies and procedures.
30. The postholder must conduct the duties in compliance with the Best Value Duty as set out in the Local Government Act 1999.
31. Undertaking any other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of this post.
32. 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.
33. We are committed to an inclusive workplace where everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. All employees are expected to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion, and candidates may be assessed on their ability to contribute to an inclusive working environment.
34. Undertake any other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of this post.

Essential Requirements

	Criteria
1	**Knowledge** • Some knowledge of all core legislation such as the Housing Act 1985, Housing Act 1996 as amended by Homelessness Act 2002, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, housing needs issues, related legislation and case law. • A good working knowledge of housing benefit rules and of the supply and demand issues related to public sector and private housing in an inner London council. • Comprehensive knowledge of prevention tools and options.
2	**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. • Application of the Suitability Assessment in recommending potential pathways for applicants.

	• Experience of negotiation/advocacy/mediation.
3	**Skills and Abilities** • 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. • Ability to achieve targets and methodically respond to changing demands and priorities. • Excellent inter-personal skills, with an ability to develop a rapport with and guide residents towards sustainable outcomes. • Ability to negotiate with households in housing need and influence outcomes • Commitment to motivating and empowering people to succeed and providing excellent customer service • Ability to communicate well, in writing and in person. • 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.

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