

Job capsule supplementary information

Position	Housing Options Visiting Officer
Department/ location	Housing Options
Reports to	Housing Needs Manager
Staffing responsibilities	None

Overall context and purpose of the role

The key purpose of the Visiting Officer post is to assist the Housing Options service in delivering its key objectives of preventing customers from becoming homeless and moving into temporary accommodation.

A requirement of the role will be to travel extensively around the borough meeting customers in their homes to advise on housing options in accordance with the law, policies and procedures operating within the department. It will assist Housing Options to meet the Council's statutory duties towards housing applicants under the Housing Act 1996 Parts VI and VII.

Main duties and responsibilities

- To prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless by providing high quality housing advice, mediation and realistic housing options.
- To undertake unannounced and planned visits to all housing applicants and their hosts who are evicting them with a view to preventing homelessness.
- To refer customers to the welfare reform task force wherever appropriate, to assist them in getting back into work.
- To carry out customer accommodation suitability assessments, to determine the physical condition of the accommodation, location, affordability, overcrowding and determine any risk of violence.
- To assist in preventing homelessness by mediating in cases of family breakdowns and demonstrating good negotiation skills.
- To provide a comprehensive housing related advice and information service in accordance with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and ensure advice is giving in accordance with the legislation, caselaw and local policies.
- To carry out occupancy checks to verify that clients are occupying their temporary accommodation, providing prompt, detailed, accurate reports with photographs, on findings.
- To help manage customer expectations by providing information relevant to a client's case and help prevent homelessness.

- To provide good quality advice and assistance to enable our clients to evaluate their housing options and where appropriate to find their own suitable accommodation.
- To carry out mediation work to prevent family breakdown and homelessness.
- To identify the needs of our clients who are most in need and make appropriate recommendations based on the findings from the visit.
- To provide a service to the Housing Needs officers, by verifying relevant applicant details, visiting households recording findings and making appropriate recommendations.
- To assist in providing a comprehensive, tailored customer-focused services to tenants and landlords. Maintaining accurate case notes and accurate information on databases.
- To offer good housing advice to customers and keep abreast of changes to relevant legislation and communicate this in an understandable manner to customers.
- To detect and report any incidents of suspected fraud to the relevant senior officer and to liaise with other departments such as the councils Corporate Anti-Fraud team (CAFT), Housing Benefit, Internal Audit and Legal.
- To follow safeguarding procedures and policies to ensure vulnerable children and adults with housing difficulties receive the right services at the right time
- To carry out property condition inspections working alongside other relevant agencies including Environmental Health.
- To carry out visits both in and out of London.

General Obligations

Performance management

Ensure that performance targets are met and a culture of performance management, customer care, value for money and resident / service users' empowerment is embedded across the Group

Flexibility

Work with a degree of flexibility required to perform work not specifically referred to above although falling within the scope of the post at the appropriate grade.

Health and Safety

All employees have a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of people at work and members of the public in premises or sites controlled by The Barnet Group in accordance with safety legislation and The Barnet Group safety policy.

The Barnet Group's commitment

Deliver The Barnet Group's commitment to equality of opportunity both in the provision of services and as an employer. Promote equality in the work place and in the services The Barnet Group delivers.

Demonstrate commitment to a culture of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

Person Specification

Job title: Visiting Officer

Education, Qualifications, Memberships

Essential:

- You must have a car for work purposes, business insurance and a clean driving license.
- A - Level education or equivalent through relevant training/experience.
- A demonstrably high standard of verbal and written literacy and numeracy.

Experience

Essential:

- 12 months experience of working within the housing sector
- A proven track record of partnership, multi-agency working and networking skills

Desirable:

- 24 months experience in a customer facing role.

Skills and Knowledge

Essential:

- Knowledge of housing legislation and guidance including homelessness legislation.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills and the ability to effectively engage with a diverse range of audiences, including managers, landlords, solicitors and vulnerable customers, in a courteous and professional manner and at times in stressful situations.
- A practical understanding of what constitutes excellent customer care, how it can be improved and a commitment to delivering it.
- Effective networker, able to liaise effectively, and share expertise and information with other agencies and voluntary groups.
- Confident communicator with the ability to manage and resolve difficult and confrontational situations.
- Meticulous record keeper with the ability to maintain accurate case notes, ensuring they are completed in a timely manner within target timescales and to maintain information on databases.
- Demonstrably positive 'can do' attitude.
- Able to work effectively and flexibly in a team, supporting colleagues and managers.
- Ability to effectively prioritise a challenging workload, ensuring all urgent tasks are covered or delegated appropriately.

- Ability to ensure that cases are handed over seamlessly to colleagues.
- Ability to operate effectively in a changing environment, to develop and acquire new skills and knowledge.
- The ability to apply learning in the workplace to support continuous improvement of business systems for the benefit of customers.
- Ability to draw logical conclusions from personal observations during home visits and from interviews from customers.
- A practical understanding of and adherence to Health and Safety Policies to ensure personal and staff safety particularly when working alone in customers' homes.
- IT literate – ability to work with databases and MS Office applications.

Desirable:

- Knowledge of latest legislation such as immigration and welfare benefits (Housing Acts 1996, 1988, 2002), Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 Homelessness Code of Guidance, Allocations Code of guidance, Protection from Eviction Act 1977, Children's Act 1989 and Localism Act 2011.

Values	Behaviour Indicators
• Show respect	• Treat other people as you wish to be treated yourself
• Find solutions	• Think outside the box, and be innovative
• Make a difference	• Go the extra mile to show your customers you really care
• Be person-centred	• Treat everyone you meet as an individual, and remember, one size does not fit all