

Job description

Post title: Homelessness Services Manager

Service area: Housing Needs and Strategy

Grade: PO9

Reports to: Assistant Director of Housing Needs

Your team: Homelessness Services

Number of supervisees: Up to 7 direct reports

Our ambition

We're determined to make Islington more equal. To create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life.

We also have an ambitious goal – to be the best council in the country – with every employee clear about the part they play and inspired, focused and supported to give their very best.

We want to build an organisation where employees feel valued, inspired and empowered to help us achieve our goals and provide the best services possible to our residents.

Our values and behaviours

'Be Islington' is about setting a clear challenge about what it means to be an Islington employee and sets the standard for every new recruit.

We ask our employees to 'Be Islington' – playing their part in working together for a more equal borough and to always be collaborative, be ambitious, be resourceful, and be empowering ('CARE').

Our commitment to challenging inequality

We are committed to tackling inequality, racism and injustice and creating a more equal borough for all. In order to do this, we need to set the example by being a fair employer and creating a workplace environment which is free from discrimination, racism and inequality. Our approach needs to be proactive, consistently learning to create a more equal workplace and foster a culture which empowers all staff to challenge inequality.

Equality is at the heart of what we do. We want to celebrate and embrace our differences by:

- Ensuring our workforce is representative of the people we work on behalf of, our residents
- Creating equitable working environments and diverse teams
- Understanding our residents in order to design and deliver services that help tackle inequality and improve life chances for our residents
- Getting to know people and their differences
- Interpreting issues and concerns from a cultural perspective and address situations or problems from the points-of-view of multiple cultures

Role Context

Islington's Housing Needs Service seeks to place residents at the heart of everything we do and, striving to treat every resident as if we are providing a service to an important member of our family. We want to ensure that Islington's Housing Needs service is seen as the best service in the country. Every person, throughout our teams, has a vital role to play in delivering this vision.

Housing Needs is a frontline service supporting vulnerable customers who will present with a range of complexities including health and social care needs. We want every person in our Service to adopt a trauma informed approach that places the customer at the heart of service delivery and as part of this to promote the spirit of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Key responsibilities

The Homelessness Services Manager –will be the strategic lead for the operational implementation, management and outcomes related to the prevention and relief of homelessness and reduction in the use of temporary accommodation in the borough. Accordingly, the postholder will be responsible for the management of four distinct teams within the Housing Needs Service comprising:

- Initial Assessment team- responsible for all initial assessments in to the service and upstream prevention activity to negate the need for the customer to make a homeless approach to the council.
- Prevention and Relief service- responsible for a combination of upstream and downstream prevention and relief activities to minimise the need for customers to progress to a main duty housing application.
- Inquiries and Decision service- responsible for key decisions related to homelessness applications.
- Reviews service- responsible for independent decisions related to homelessness, suitability assessments, Part 6 applications which can have a significant impact on the council's finances and reputation.

Working collaboratively with the Service Director for Housing Needs and Strategy, Assistant Director of Housing Needs and other senior Service Managers within the structure and a broad range of stakeholders from across a multi-agency partnership, the post-holder will be responsible for the design of new services and improvements in accordance with the Council's Care Principles (Collaborative, Ambitious, Resourceful and Empowering), the aim of which is to make Islington a fairer place for all residents to live and prosper.

The post-holder will lead with confidence, demonstrating flexibility, an openness to change, adaptation of new ways of working and promoting an organisational culture that empowers and involves staff and the community as a whole.

The postholder be responsible for the development of services to meet prevention and relief targets including the strategic oversight of all activities relating to the prevention and relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The postholder will oversee the provision of advice and assistance to public and private sector landlords with a view to preventing homelessness to ensure that assistance is given to households of all tenure types to prevent homelessness through active intervention and proactive intervention.

Leadership

To ensure a high quality services that delivers:

- robust initial assessment and prevention service is provided by the Initial Assessment team comprising a range of roles including a Hospital Discharge officer, Initial Assessment officers and Meet and Greet officers. These roles who play a critical role in ensuring that the council is able to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible juncture;
- a proactive approach by the Homelessness Prevention and Relief team that seeks to mitigate and prevent homelessness by utilising the widest range of housing options
- clear decisions by the Inquiries and Decisions team, underpinned by the relevant legislation, guidance, case law and holistic investigation into the customers personal circumstances, provided within the agreed timescales;
- clear independent decisions reached by the reviews officers that minimises the risk for legal challenges and places the council in a robust position to defend legal challenges should they arise.

To develop and maintain a high level of specialist and technical knowledge of the Housing Act (as amended periodically), Homeless Reduction Act (2017), the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme, Domestic Abuse Act, Care Act (2014), Human Rights Act (1998), the Statutory Code of Guidance, case law, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the appropriate application of these acts in relation to homelessness decisions and the allocation of social housing.

To maintain clear oversight of placements in temporary accommodation, working in partnership with the Assistant Director of Housing Needs and Service Improvement Manager to contain the costs associated with temporary accommodation.

To lead a service that utilises intelligence and data (qualitative and quantitative) that strives for constant improvement in the quality of services delivered.

To work collegiately with officers across the Homes and Neighbourhoods service and broadly across all council directorates, making a proactive contribution to delivering departmental and Corporate objectives.

To work in partnership with other local authorities, public sector organisations and agencies, the voluntary sector and other stakeholders to continuously improve the quality of the service and develop innovative solutions to tackling and addressing homelessness.

To ensure the effective implementation of mechanisms, protocols and Service Level Agreements with Social Services, Health and other agencies for effective liaison, for discharging statutory joint obligations and duties.

Write, agree, consult, and sign off working policies and procedures linked to the successful and efficient delivery of services, including day to day operations, legislative requirements and best practice

To lead on the development of a range of self-help tools and information to be made available through local outlets, websites, and other media and outlets.

To ensure the council's homelessness services are able to participate and contribute to case conferences with internal services (eg Adult Social Care, Childrens Services, MARAC, Daily Safeguarding meetings (DSM), hospitals etc) and provide clear advice on matters related to homelessness.

To support council initiatives and administer scheme for complex and vulnerable persons for eg. Rough sleepers, asylum seekers/refugees, victims/survivors of domestic abuse. LGBTQ+, care leavers etc.

To support the council's aim to achieve/maintain DAHA accreditation via active participation in the assessment process.

To provide leadership in relation to staff recruitment and training, disciplinary issues, welfare, health and safety matters, performance management and appraisals (quality conversations/check in's) in line with Council policies and procedures.

To set and monitor clear service performance requirements ensuring that services are delivered efficiently and effectively to a high standard of customer care by driving up performance of both individuals and teams.

To maintain robust oversight on legal challenges brought by solicitors by way of pre-action protocol letters and judicial review threats in regard to homelessness cases and to protect the Council's position and reputation.

To contribute to decisions related to the provision of temporary accommodation (as necessary) and ensuring the provision of temporary accommodation is underpinned by the Housing Act.

To lead on the responses to the Council's responses to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) enquiries and complaints. This includes provision of comprehensive responses to member enquiries that are responded to by the Customer Solutions service within the agreed targets.

To oversee and protect the Council's reputation and position in Court as and when may be required either when challenged or when the council is pursuing a legal challenge against a landlord. Accordingly, the postholder will work in conjunction with the council's legal team and external Counsel (where appropriate) to lead on the provision of witness statements, representing the council, including attendance in court as required.

To ensure responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding of adults and children at risk are met at all times and promotes the council's wider safeguarding work.

To deputise for the Assistant Director of Housing Needs in matters related to homelessness and supporting peer managers within the service.

To undertake other duties commensurate to the grade of the post.

Budget responsibilities

Responsible for the Prevention Fund that is utilised to prevent and or relieve homelessness equating to approximately. £260K annually.

Responsible for working collaboratively to containing costs related to the statutory provision of temporary accommodation

To oversee and control the provision of financial and administrative support for all the service areas that directly report to this role including responsibility for monitoring budgets and controlling spend and achieving savings targets.

Resources and Financial management

Ensure effective Financial Management, cost controls and income maximisation in an ever changing environment, fluctuating demands and priorities. Ensure resources are well managed and effectively deployed to the best possible effects assuring value for money in all activities.

Compliance

Ensure legal, regulatory and policy compliance under GDPR, Health and Safety and detection and prevention of fraud in area of your specialism identifying opportunities and risks and escalating where appropriate.

Work style

This is a flexible post that involves a combination of working from the office and working from home.

Person specification

You should demonstrate on your application form how you meet the essential criteria. Please ensure that you address each of the criteria as this will be assessed to determine your suitability for the post.

Assessment Guide

A = Application
I = Interview
T = Test

Essential criteria

Experience

Essential criteria	Criteria description	Assessed by
1	Experience of working with vulnerable members of the public in a housing, health or social care field within a diverse inner-city environment in addition to a clear understanding of the complexity of needs presented by homeless applicants (singles and families)	A/I
2	Experience of managing a holistic housing service delivering front line homelessness services in line with legislation and guidance and delivering complex dispute resolution/ mediation services	A/I

Skills

Essential criteria	Criteria description	Assessed by
3	Expert technical knowledge of the relevant legislation relating to homelessness and housing need, with particular reference to the Housing Act, Homelessness Code of Guidance, Homeless Reduction Act, Protection from Eviction Act, Domestic Abuse Act, Public Sector Quality Duty including the skills and ability to apply the aforementioned legislation within the context of homelessness	A/I
4	Ability to support with the management of budgets particularly in relation to the containment of costs associated with the provision of temporary accommodation, the management of the prevention and relief budget and external medical advice	A/I
5	Advanced written communication skills required to draft coherent complaint responses, reports and briefings for a wide range of	A/I

Essential criteria	Criteria description	Assessed by
	audiences including members and senior officers, stakeholders and customers as well as statutory bodies (eg LGSCO, Housing Ombudsman)	
6	Advanced empathy and verbal communication skills required to provide solution focussed, effective and sensitive service to customers in a pressurised setting, demonstrating an ability to deliver services that are trauma informed	A/I
7	Excellent working knowledge of the housing options available to people in housing need	A/I
8	Strong track record in developing, maintaining and working in partnership with internal departments across the council, health partners, housing associations, and the voluntary sector to elicit the best outcomes for the boroughs residents.	A/I
9	Demonstrable experience in the formulation of policies and procedures to improve service delivery and provision	A/I
10	Ability to set, monitor and meet relevant performance and service standards	A/I
11	Ability to supervise, coach, mentor and encourage staff to facilitate their on-going personal development and ensure a high level of productivity and outcomes	A/I
12	An understanding of the wider political environment within which the service operates, skilled in understanding wider perspectives	A/I
13	Resilient in overcoming challenges by identifying pragmatic solutions, demonstrating energy, resilience and self-motivation	A/I
14	Knowledge and ability to comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	A/I

Special requirements of the post

Essential criteria	Criteria description	Assessed by
15	This role will require you to obtain an enhanced satisfactory clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service	A

Our accreditations

Our accreditations include: the Healthy Workplace award, Timewise, London Living Wage Employer, Disability Confident Committed, The Mayor's Good Work Standard, Stonewall Diversity Champion, and Time to Change.

