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| **Job Description** |
| **Post title** | Prison Accommodation Officer |
| **JE Reference No** | N10317 |
| **Grade** | 7 |
| **Service** | Regeneration, Economy & Growth  |
| **Service Area** | Development & Housing - Housing Solutions |
| **Reporting to** | Housing Team Leader |
| **Location** | Your normal place of work will be County Hall, Durham but you may be required to work at any Council workplace within County Durham. |
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| **DBS** | This post **is not** subject to a disclosure. |
| **Flexitime** | This post **is** eligible for flexitime. |
| **Politically restricted** | This post **is not** designated as a politically restricted post in accordance with the requirements of Section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and by regulations made from time to time by the Secretary of State. |

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| **Description of role** |

The post holder will be responsible for opening pathways for those leaving prisons and hospitals that are at risk of rough sleeping; including applications to the necessary local authority under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended); as well as the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and the assisted prevention of homelessness.

The post holder will give provision of a high standard of housing information, advice, guidance and advocacy support to assist offenders in accessing accommodation and securing tenancies. You will also provide advice and support to ex-offenders to avoid accruing rent arrears and debt and to successfully manage a tenancy.

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| **Duties and responsibilities** |

Listed below are the responsibilities this role will be primarily responsible for:

* To work within prisons within the northeast to identify clients as requiring homelessness assessments, or advice and assistance to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.
* To provide advice and support, including negotiations with landlords and other third parties to prevent homelessness, including financial assessments, maximisation of income and completing applications for discretionary Housing Payments and case monitoring; referring into necessary support organisations as required.
* Delivering basic information around rights and entitlements to housing and benefits for offenders.
* To manage own caseload and ensure effective housing interventions are achieved based on clients requirements through the proactive use of a range of prevention tools.
* Carry out client interviews, investigations and develop personalised housing plans to ensure a client’s needs are met; to prevent rough sleeping, sofa surfing and homelessness on leaving prison.
* Maintain comprehensive records to demonstrate the effective service, including written confirmation of advice and options to clients.
* Attend and contribute to regular team meetings and training, as necessary to the role of Prison Accommodation Officer
* Make referrals for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children and organise and attend multi-agency meetings as appropriate.
* Assist with the issues faced by ex-offenders on release and the support needs of people who are homeless/at risk of becoming homeless, and how to address these needs, providing positive outcomes.
* Contribute to the continuous improvement of the service and be involved in service reviews and the development of procedures and good working practices.
* Keep up to date with all relevant legislation, guidance and case law with regard to homelessness and allocations ensuring any change to legislation is drawn into the service.
* Develop good working relationships with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies and to encourage a co-ordinated approach to enable the best possible service with the aim of preventing homelessness or repeat homelessness.
* Work with other agencies to assist in securing suitable accommodation.
* Undertake home visits as required.
* Advise on suitable temporary accommodation to those applicants where necessary.
* Maintain effective and productive working relationships with support agencies, partners, advocates and carers to ensure that a coordinated support, benefit and care package is provided to clients.

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| **Organisational responsibilities** |

* **Values and behaviours**

To demonstrate and be a role model for the council’s values and behaviours to promote and encourage positive behaviours, enhancing the quality and integrity of the services we provide.

* **Smarter working, transformation and design principles**

To seek new and innovative ideas to work smarter, irrespective of job role, and to be creative, innovative and empowered. Understand the operational impact of transformational change and service design principles to support new ways of working and to meet customer needs.

* **Communication**

To communicate effectively with our customers, managers, peers and partners and to work collaboratively to provide the best possible public service. Communication between teams, services and partner organisations is imperative in providing the best possible service to our public.

* **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

To take responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing in accordance with the council’s Health and Safety policy and procedures.

* **Equality and diversity**

To promote a society that gives everyone an equal chance to learn, work and live, free from discrimination and prejudice and ensure our commitment is put into practice. All employees are responsible for eliminating unfair and unlawful discrimination in everything that they do.

* **Confidentiality**

To work in a way that does not divulge personal and/or confidential information and follow the council’s policies and procedures in relation to data protection and security of information.

* **Climate Change**

To contribute to our corporate responsibility in relation to climate change by considering and limiting the carbon impact of activities during the course of your work, wherever possible.

* **Performance management**

To promote a culture whereby performance management is ingrained and the highest of standards and performance are achieved by all. Contribute to the council’s Performance and Development Review processes to ensure continuous learning and improvement and to increase organisational performance.

* **Quality assurance (for applicable posts)**

To set, monitor and evaluate standards at individual, team and service level so that the highest standards of service are delivered and maintained. Use data, where appropriate, to enhance the quality of service provision and support decision making processes.

* **Management and leadership (for applicable posts)**

To provide vision and leadership to inspire and empower all employees so they can reach their full potential and contribute to the council’s values and behaviours. Managers and leaders must engage in personal development to ensure they are equipped to lead transformational change; always searching for better ways to do things differently to meet organisational changes and service priorities.

* **Financial management (for applicable posts)**

To manage a designated budget, ensuring that the service achieves value for money in all circumstances through the monitoring of expenditure and the early identification of any financial irregularity.

*The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by your manager.*

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| Person specification |
|  | Essential | Desirable |
| Qualifications | * NVQ Level 3 or equivalent
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| Experience | * Experience within a housing, homelessness or support related service
* Experiencing of determining homelessness and preventing homelessness through an advice and housing options approach.
* Experience of co-ordinating support for individuals
 | * Local Government experience
* Experience of giving support to vulnerable people
* Experience of working with offenders
* Experience of writing, implementing and supporting through support plans.
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| Skills & Knowledge | * Knowledge of homelessness legislation
* Good verbal and written communication skills
* Ability to work to deadlines and organise/prioritise workload
* Good ICT skills
* Good interpersonal skills including ability to work as part of a team and in partnership with a wide range of external agencies
* The ability to deal with people effectively and sympathetically in sometimes difficult situations.
 | * Knowledge of other housing legislation
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| Personal Qualities | * A desire to achieve a high quality of life for customers.
* Access to a vehicle for work purposes or means of mobility support (if driving then must have a current valid driving licence and appropriate insurance)
* Flexible and willing to work outside normal working hours when required.
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