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| **Job Description** | |
| **Post title** | Housing Solutions Officer |
| **JE Reference No** | N8677 |
| **Grade** | 7 |
| **Service** | Regeneration, Economy &Growth |
| **Service Area** | Development & Housing - Housing Solutions |
| **Reporting to** | Senior Housing Solutions Officer |
| **Location** | Your normal place of work will be Seaham or Crook 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** |

Provision of a high standard, comprehensive homelessness and assisted prevention service to service users of the County, assessing and determining duties owed under the statutory provisions of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended); the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and associated legislation.

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| **Duties and responsibilities** |

* Provide a front-line service through face to face and written communication to customers identified as requiring homelessness assessments, or advice and assistance to prevent homelessness.
* To provide advice to clients on options open to them to retain existing accommodation or secure suitable re-housing 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.
* To work within the Stronger Families Framework to ensure members of the public access appropriate services to sustain accommodation, health and wellbeing, including access to training and employment opportunities.
* Investigate and determine homelessness and priority need ensuring effective outcomes are achieved based on client’s requirements through the proactive use of a range of prevention tools.
* Manage own caseload, carry out client assessments and develop and maintain personalised housing plans.
* Maintain comprehensive records to demonstrate the effective service, including written confirmation of advice and options to clients.
* Make referrals for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children and organise and attend multi-agency meetings as appropriate such as Team around the Family or Child Protection Conferences.
* 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 Housing Solutions Service
* Act as the named liaison person to one external agency, providing regular updates on referrals in and changes with this service to the Housing Solutions Team.
* Provide an “out of hours” service for Homeless Applicants ensuring temporary accommodation is secured if required.
* Develop good working relationships with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies and to encourage a co-ordinated approach to enable the best possible service.
* Liaise with other colleagues within Durham County Council and other agencies to effectively resolve issues relating to homelessness with the aim of preventing homelessness or repeat homelessness.
* Work with other agencies to assist in securing suitable accommodation.
* Ensure the discharge of the County Council’s statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002, Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and other relevant legislation including the investigation of homelessness applications.
* Undertake home visits as required.
* To act as Duty Officer, as required, taking the lead on case investigation on these days and allocating to other Housing Solutions Officers.
* To assist Housing Advice Line as required.
* Arrange suitable temporary accommodation to those applicants where a duty is owed.
* To assist with targeted welfare reform work as directed.
* To advise and assist clients with financial assistance claims, which will include welfare changes, which may include Universal Credit.
* Participate as directed in outreach initiatives to link in with genuine Rough Sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping, working with partners to address this across the County.
* To assess the needs of rough sleepers, involve specialist agencies as necessary, ensuring a holistic approach is maintained.

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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 |  |
| Experience | * Experience within a housing, homelessness or support related service * Experiencing of determining homelessness applications and preventing homelessness through an advice and housing options approach. | * Local Government Experience * Experience of giving support to vulnerable people * Experience of writing, implementing and supporting through support plans |
| Skills & Knowledge | * Knowledge of housing and 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 * A good understanding of housing opportunities and policies * The ability to deal with people effectively and sympathetically in sometimes difficult and sensitive situations * Be able to work as part of a team and support other colleagues in their roles |  |
| Personal Qualities | * A caring approach and a desire to achieve a high quality of life for customers * Access to a car 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. |  |