

LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE

ROLE DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Role Title:	Reviews Officer		
Directorate:	Place	Grade:	LBR 10
Department:	Housing	Hours/weeks:	36 hours/52.14 weeks
Function:	Housing Needs	Post number:	
Team:	Housing Reviews & Service Improvement	Base/location:	Lynton House
Reports to:	Reviews & Service Improvement Manager		
Responsible for:	No direct line management but may be responsible for the supervision of workers, trainees and work placement staff on occasion		

Role and Context	
Overall Role Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To carry out high quality, timely reviews of homelessness decisions (negative homeless decisions, suitability, discharge of duty) under section 202 of the Housing Act 1996; , reviews functions under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017; part VI reviews of Housing register assessment's and housing offers through choice based lettings Manage cases that go to section 204 appeal in the County Court and to further appeal in the higher courts; judicial reviews and other housing court challenges To reduce the need for provision of temporary accommodation and resulting expenditure by ensuring effective and timely reviews but also offering good quality options, prevention and relief advice as part of reviews casework To take responsibility for the recording of high quality, key data on all types of reviews which support the submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government ensuring key trends on homelessness, the causes and solutions is available. Also ensuring information on homelessness and allocations as it relates to reviews is available for analysis locally to support the management of demand and response to trends This is a specialist role that will be at the forefront of the new reviews functions following the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2017.
Role Context:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This position is fundamental to the provision of housing advice and homelessness services to vulnerable customers who may approach the council for assistance as a result of the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reductions Act 2017 duties, and other key housing legislation, alongside the Children Act and the Care Act. This is a specialist role that will be at the forefront of the prevention of homelessness, and at the cutting edge following the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2017. In particular the new review and appeal duties created will require adapting to enable the service to comply with the emerging new regime.

Key Accountabilities and Result Areas

1. Strategy and Planning

- The post holder will be required to have comprehensive knowledge of all housing advice and homelessness legislation, other general housing legislation, welfare benefit expertise and knowledge of the adult & children social care environment and impact and to use this knowledge to support customers and achieve positive outcomes
- The post holder will be required to have specialist knowledge of the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Children Act, and the Care Act. Combined with specialist knowledge of the Welfare Reform Act.
- The post holder needs to use this knowledge to work collaboratively with customers to resolve their reviews and to identify the most appropriate and effective solutions to their housing problems and to do so proactively at the most appropriate time – ensuring the maximum opportunities for early intervention
- The post holder will be required to be innovative, dynamic and solutions focussed and consider and pursue all available housing options to prevent the customers from becoming homeless.
- The post holder will be required to use their experience to contribute to the ongoing development and design of the service and solutions for customers.

2. Operations and Support

- To contribute as a member of the Reviews and Service Improvement team.
- To manage all aspects of own casework in association with all reviews carried out, keeping detailed case notes, liaising with the customer and their advocates, and responding to solicitors and other correspondence within target and to a very high standard
- To provide any necessary input on cases that are appealed in the County Court and beyond, preparing witness statements and responses to appeal as required in conjunction other officers and managers, and the Council's Legal Department.
- To take appropriate decisions on requests for interim accommodation pending review or county court appeal.
- To support the response to emergency judicial review applications in a timely and professional way on topics including failure to accommodate pending review, suitability of temporary accommodation offered under s.193, and to work with Legal Services to defend all legal challenges. Respond to pre action protocol letters in cases of threatened Judicial Review proceedings and take appropriate action to ensure the Council complies with its statutory obligations to homeless households.
- To carry out reviews of suitability of temporary accommodation, private rented sector offers and discharges of the homelessness duty including as a result of refusal of part VI offers.
- To fully consider customers vulnerability under either the law on housing, the Care Act 2014, or the Children Act 1989
- Provide appropriate contributions to the development of high quality Personalised Housing Plans.
- Effectively assess customers support needs, record and act on these, making referrals for resettlement support as required
- Conduct non statutory reviews of allocations scheme decisions under part VI of the Housing Act 1996, including decisions on qualification and level of preference.
- Carry out high quality and compliant new Homelessness Reduction Act reviews of the prevention, relief and main duty requirements, and accommodation offers.
- Support learning from reviews and other casework and assist in improving the consistency of decision making and quality of decisions by raising and working through issues that arise on reviews with Housing Solutions Officers & Team Leaders, Housing Supply Team Leader & Officers, Acquisitions & TA Team Leader and Officers and Suitability Officers.
- Support innovation within the service through the application of best practice housing and homelessness solutions as a means of mitigating the negative impact of welfare reforms.
- Work with customers and colleagues to contribute to Personalised Housing Plans for customers on behalf of the council in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- Contribute to the development of the reviews service as a member of the team.
- Make recommendations for housing assistance through the bond and incentive scheme and prevention payments where expenditure on and discretionary assistance of this type is appropriate.
- Prepare effective response to Members Enquiries, Complaints, and Ombudsman Enquiries, Freedom of Information Requests as directed.
- Liaise as appropriate with the Housing Supply and Acquisitions team regarding issues arising in review related to customers specific needs, accommodation standards in temporary accommodation and performance by managing agents and private sector landlords.
- Provide an effective, customer-focussed and efficient service to customers presenting with housing problems.
- Prioritise early intervention and create an environment for responding to customers issues as soon as possible

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide proactive and timely housing advice and options to customers that supports the achievement of positive outcomes for households wherever possible To advise customers on full range of options to solve their housing problem, including • To refer customers for specialist information as necessary – on landlord and tenant issues, mobility options, resettlement and rough sleeping • To professionally and effectively interview customers and carry out rigorous investigations • To carry out robust, good quality casework on the customers case – collating and analysing information, reconsidering initial officers interpretation of the case and considering specialist advice and opinion • To use relevant identity/credit software and other tools that enables the service to check and verify applications and the circumstances affecting the service user. • To write and issue statutory S202 decision letters, minded to decisions and other relevant decision letters • To request the provision of temporary accommodation and private sector support where necessary • To deal with all review related correspondence e.g. from solicitors, councillors, voluntary sector agencies, and applicants. • To make recommendations for service area improvement and feedback concerns and trends from reviews, and prepare reports for senior management as required. • To work jointly with all relevant teams within the Housing service and other Council departments including Housing Standards Team ,Children’s services, Tenancy Sustainment Team, and Legal Services. • Comply with all relevant statutory requirements, Government Guidance and Codes, Redbridge policies and procedures, professional and performance standards and best housing and homelessness prevention practice. • Ensure the accurate recording of all customers and all advice and support provided and to ensure this is actively updated as situations change. To maintain 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 and electronic file • To advise clients of available tenancy support services including floating support, income maximisation, debt and rent arrears advice, Discretionary Housing Payments, Housing Benefit support, mobility mutual exchange and under-occupation schemes • Any other duties appropriate to the post and grade.
3. Systems and Process Development and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To utilise the homelessness system to update reviews information on cases and contribute to produce personal housing plans and to provide key monitoring information for submission to the HCLic system created by DCLG and for local information reporting and management • To maintain customers electronic files on info@work providing a thorough audit trail of activity and key documents in line with agreed process • To comply with all monitoring systems put in place in response to service issues and needs which support the provision of a high quality, legally compliant service • To contribute to learning opportunities, training and service improvement exercises across Housing Needs related to learning and new requirements on reviews. • To contribute to the development design and implementation of new policies and processes within reviews and more broadly in Housing Needs as appropriate.
4. Communication Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop effective working relationships with colleagues within Redbridge, other council and statutory services, advocates and solicitors, external bodies, service users, landlords as well as voluntary and other housing organisations and ensure effective referrals. • Work with Redbridge Legal Services. Attend the High Court, Appeal Court and County Court with Legal Services on relevant cases • Produce supporting information and briefing reports for Legal Services to offer guidance and assistance with Court cases affecting the Service as required. • Work professionally with service users, their representatives and other agencies involved with Reviews and Appeals. • Work effectively and efficiently with colleagues within the service, across other departments and external agencies to deliver an excellent customer focused service, meeting set targets and KPI’s. • Attend meetings of relevant partnership boards and agencies and represent the team and/or service as required. • Understand the value of information to the council and to contribute to good information governance by keeping information safe, accurate and up to date and available to those who need it. Officers are required to abide by the council’s information governance policies. • To ensure the provision of advice and review services to customers through personal or telephone interviews, correspondence, advocacy, reception, home visiting, outreach work and surgeries, workshops and talks to customer groups.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to enquiries, complaints, freedom of information requests 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 procedures. Prepare information as required to support court cases (reviews and appeals, judicial reviews etc.). Liaise with customers, statutory organisations, advocates and third sector providers to arrive at a sustainable housing solution for customers with complex and multiple needs for example mental health combined with drug and or alcohol addiction. Internal Contacts: Staff in Housing External Contacts: Members, MPs, Solicitors, Advocates, Advice Agencies, People Directorate, Health, Redbridge Enforcement, Youth Offending Team, Police, Probation Service, private sector landlords, Hostels and Bed & Breakfasts, third sector providers, service users, their friends, relatives and advisors. To assist in developing full range of information and publicity for all clients as well as supporting the development of internal procedures. The officer is required to take reasonable care for the safety and health of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts; and to work with management to comply with Service/Unit procedures and protocols and with Redbridge Council's Health and Safety Policy and all guidance, instructions and risk assessments. In particular the officer is required to attend training relevant to their post in order to ensure their health and safety responsibilities are met.
5. Performance and Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the service carries out independent reviews of homeless decisions, suitability of offers of temporary accommodation and private sector offers to discharge duty, part VI offers of accommodation and part VI assessment reviews in a timely manner. Ensure the process minimises costs including expenditure on temporary accommodation and supports the efficient management of the service. Contribute to the achievement of Housing and Housing Needs service plan priorities and objectives and meet key targets. Recognising the critical impact of homelessness on customers, and delivering early, accurate and high quality advice Responsibility for accurate record keeping and use of systems to ensure comprehensive ability to report on customers individual service provision and overall homeless trends To ensure that casework is proactively managed and key deadlines - for the provision of actions on customers individual reviews, as well as key process deadlines on casework management are adhered to To answer members enquiries and draft responses to complaints / enquiries on individual cases as required. To provide statistical information on performance as requested. To ensure the council's policy, in respect of the Homelessness Strategy, TA Placement and Housing Allocations Scheme is carried out.
Key Performance Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews, complaints enquiries and appeals responded to on target Target on review's and appeals overturned and upheld are met Qualitative performance on decision making Numbers in temporary accommodation Temporary accommodation spend Legal spending
6. Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The postholder has no specific budget management responsibilities. However decisions can have significant financial impacts and cause both the commitment of resources and of long term housing provision commitments. As below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to provide support for various housing options (for example provision of a rent incentive); upholding or overturning homelessness decisions to accept or refuse a duty; or to provide temporary accommodation; to commit legal costs on a review decision upholding or overturning housing assessment and priority decisions upholding or overturning offer decisions under part VI
Corporate Accountabilities	All employees of the Council should undertake and conduct their work with due regard to the corporate accountabilities (available on the Redbridge Council website). These include responsibilities for outcomes regarding Equality, Conduct & Behaviour, Health & Safety, Data Protection, Safeguarding and Customer Care.
Flexibility	The key responsibilities and duties of the role are neither exclusive nor exhaustive. All workers are expected to operate flexibly to support delivery of services and from time to time will be required to undertake responsibilities outside the normal remit of role description as required by the line manager, which are broadly commensurate with the job level and scope of competence.

	The postholder may be required to participate in the rota to provide the homelessness out of hours service
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Person Specification		A - I - T
Knowledge & Experience		
Method of candidate assessment: A = Application form I = Interview T = Test		
Statutory or Mandatory qualifications:	No Mandatory Qualification Required	A
Educational Ability	Level 4: Specialist learning with ability to undertake detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study. May be evidenced by: Certificates of higher education; NVQ level 4; HND; BTEC Professional; and equivalent qualifications, or evidence of demonstrable application in the course of experience.	A
Key Subject or Content Areas (inc: Desirable Qualifications)	A specialist knowledge of the law relating to homelessness as covered by the 1996 Housing Act and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Good knowledge of the Children’s Act, and the Care Act as this social care legislation interacts with housing and homelessness issues Good knowledge of the Welfare Reform Act A detailed knowledge of the housing allocations as covered by the Housing Act 1996 Part VI	AI T
Knowledge	Excellent current knowledge of housing issues, legislation, case-law, policy and best practice in the delivery of services Knowledge and commitment to provide first class customer service. A good knowledge and understanding of the government’s welfare reform programme and its implications for the private rented sector and homelessness A specialist, knowledge of all homelessness legislation, case law and codes of guidance A detailed knowledge of housing allocations and the operation of part VI of the Housing Act 1996 Knowledge of private sector housing, security of tenure, protection from eviction and housing standards A thorough knowledge of the range of services provided by the Council for households who are in housing need. An understanding of the financial implications of decisions A good knowledge of services, benefits and support available to applicants experiencing housing problems	AI T

<p>Experience</p>	<p>Experience dealing of making a range of homelessness decisions and decisions on part VI</p> <p>Extensive experience of working with people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, in housing need and/or living in unsatisfactory housing.</p> <p>Experience of providing an excellent level of customer care and customer service in a comparable customer service environment.</p> <p>Experience of prioritising competing demands in a pressurised environment, recognising service priorities and managing a caseload within agreed targets.</p> <p>Experience of achieving performance targets, deadlines and meeting departmental objectives</p> <p>Experience of providing an effective advice service to members of the public</p> <p>Experience of implementing an equality and diversity approach to service delivery</p> <p>Experience of working in a team</p> <p>Experience of working in a demanding front line customer service environment and of dealing effectively with confrontational and challenging situations</p> <p>Experience of working with vulnerable customers and providing appropriate support Experience of working with homeless customers and those in housing need</p> <p>Experience of carrying out interviews, investigations, negotiations</p> <p>Experience of effective record keeping including electronically</p>	<p>AI T</p>
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Skills / Abilities	<p>Excellent oral and written communication skills, with an ability to explain complex information clearly to a range of audiences, write detailed technical letters and reports and to direct complex interviews and convey complex advice simply and understandably to customers</p> <p>Excellent negotiating, influencing and liaison skills</p> <p>Excellent analytical skills with the ability to gather information and interpret complex issues e.g. legislation and Case Law quickly, to think creatively about problems and identify solutions</p> <p>Ability to work in partnership with a wide range of people and organisations.</p> <p>Performance focussed and able to meet targets and support the team to deliver.</p> <p>Proactive, flexible and responsive</p> <p>Able to achieve positive outcomes for customers</p> <p>Ability to work as part of a team and take initiative with own cases.</p> <p>Ability to participate in effective joint working across services.</p> <p>Commitment to the promotion of a homeless prevention approach.</p> <p>Flexible, problem-solving approach to service delivery with a positive attitude to change and ability to identify opportunities and develop innovative housing solutions for customers</p> <p>Able to set and maintain the highest standards in professional relationships and behaviour with customers, colleagues and other external contacts.</p> <p>Ability to work effectively and even-handedly with people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances</p> <p>Ability to analyse complex issues and written material quickly, to think creatively about problems and identify solutions</p> <p>Ability to plan, prioritise and delegate work and achieve tasks within tight deadlines</p> <p>Ability to effectively use range of IT applications including database, Word, spreadsheet.</p>	AI T
Special Conditions of Service	<p>To work outside normal working hours to respond to emergencies or attend meetings</p> <p>Must demonstrate an understanding of the issues relating to equal opportunities in service delivery and provision and to actively promote ways of eradicating racism, sexism and other forms of negative discrimination through the Council's policies and procedures.</p> <p>To comply with the Council's Health & Safety Policy.</p>	AI T
Corporate Behaviours	<p>The Council has a set of behaviours that all employees are expected to deliver in the performance of their role. The behaviour framework can be found on the Council's internet page, and these should be reflected in your application and the way you work. As part of an individual's personal development Redbridge expects employees of all levels to be continuously developing these core behaviours.</p>	AI T
Effective and Collaborative Team Working	<p>To take responsibility for personal development and actively participate in all learning and development.</p> <p>To participate in the ongoing development, implementation and monitoring of service plans.</p> <p>To support and contribute to value for money, service efficiency and improvement.</p>	AI T
Working Pattern and travel	<p>To take responsibility for personal development and actively participate in all learning and development.</p> <p>To participate in the ongoing development, implementation and monitoring of service plans.</p> <p>To support and contribute to value for money, service efficiency and improvement.</p>	AI

Safeguarding and Disclosure	DBS Disclosure Required? Not required / Basic / Enhanced	A T
Special Factors or Constraints		