Housing Officer

Job Profile

Incorporates

Section 1  Post Descriptor

Section 2  Person Descriptor
SECTION 1: POST DESCRIPTOR

1. JOB DETAILS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title: Housing Officer</th>
<th>Department: Housing &amp; Employability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Section: Housing Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reports to: Team Leader – Housing Operations</td>
<td>Grade: 6</td>
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<td>Position Number: HE3435</td>
<td>Gauge Reference:</td>
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2. JOB PURPOSE

This post within housing operations encompasses a range of existing tasks & roles which will be delivered through an enhanced, multi-disciplined generic housing officer job profile and associated service delivery model.

The post delivers a robust pre-tenancy and ongoing tenancy case management role aimed at delivering the following key service objectives:

- Person centred housing and pre-tenancy advice.
- Wrap around tenancy management services designed to achieve tenancy and community sustainability
- Maximise rental income, undertake arrears prevention activity and maximise access to employability services
- Reduce void rent loss and the number of empty homes
- Deliver local lettings planning through localised area housing teams within a local policy and legislative framework

3. DIMENSIONS and SCOPE OF JOB
(including budgetary and staffing responsibilities)

**Budget:** Use of council credit card with appropriate limits
They will also undertake a financial assessment of the tenant’s ability to finance their rent and make referral to other services to maximise customer income and maximise WDC income stream.

**Staffing Direct:** None

**Staffing Indirect:** Work with Assistant Housing Officers to provide a full housing operations service to all applicants, tenants and residents of WDC
The post holder will also be required to foster positive working relationships with a wide range of external partner agencies. The post holder will be required to lead multi agency case discussion in relation to secure and short Scottish secure tenancies.
4. ORGANISATIONAL CHART
(shows levels directly above and below this post and includes grades of posts)

Area Co-Ordinator

Team Leader Housing Operations

Housing Officer

5. ROLE OF DEPARTMENT/SECTION

The housing operations service area sits with the Strategic Lead for Housing and Employability.

The service consists of circa 112 posts and has an income generating capacity within the Council structure. It is responsible for the strategic delivery of the WDC Landlord role and access to housing and housing allocations functions ensuring compliance with all appropriate legislation and associated regulations, policies and procedures and good practice guidance.

Activity is focussed on maximising council income through a range of measures designed to increase rent collection, reduce the number of empty homes and rent loss due to voids and provide better homes within a sustainable housing living environment.

The service area is customer focussed and has been designed to maximise our tenants’ income through housing and other welfare benefits, access to working 4U services and direct support and assistance via the third sector.

The service area will deliver a culture of ownership and continuous improvement as part of an integrated cohesive housing and employability service, working with a wide range of service partners and agencies to develop joint planning objectives, ensuring that the Councils policies and strategic Corporate objectives are met.

6. KEY ACTIVITIES, RESPONSIBILITIES and OUTCOMES

Pre-Tenancy

Deliver wrap around person centred sustainable housing solutions through a case management system incorporating:

- Person centred housing advice based upon localised supply and demand and individual housing need.
• Load and process the application for housing and follow pre-tenancy reference process and obtain supporting ID within recognised timescales.
• Assist the client to complete relevant application(s) for medical points, where required; and refer to WDC Occupational Therapist for consideration of medical priority points.
• Undertake a financial assessment of the clients ability to pay rent and manage a tenancy, whilst maximising opportunity to access housing benefit, complete HB form and/or intention to claim, welfare fund support, (community care grant) access welfare rights services and maximise employability opportunities. Ensure that those with outstanding rent arrears and WDC sundry debt are referred to corporate debt officers to establish an affordable repayment plan.
• Assist the client to access furniture packages or re-decoration schemes where required and assist the client through the devolved void budget and care grant process if applicable.
• Identify appropriate support needs for those requiring ongoing personal and tenancy support, for example through housing support services or HSCP such as addiction services, mental health services, occupational therapy.
• Ensure changes to housing application details are undertaken timeously to maximise opportunity for re-housing and keep client informed of outcomes
• Explain both the tenant and landlord responsibilities contained within the WDC SST/SSST tenancy agreement, prior to accompanied viewing and sign up with relevant Housing Officer
• Ensure formal case handover with client and local housing officer, where required.

Allocating Housing.
• Ensure that void properties within the designated geographical housing patch are matched within relevant target timescales, agree order of priority and maximise use of the pre-allocation process to minimise void rent loss and the number of empty homes and maximise client opportunity for re-housing.
• Maximise use of local lettings planning activity and landing profiles to make best use of stock to achieve tenant and community sustainability.
• Ensure that properties are passed for repair timeously and keep prospective tenant informed throughout void house process to prepare for occupancy
• Undertake accompanied viewing at earliest opportunity, prepare for occupancy and ensure that intention to claim benefit is processed at earliest opportunity ahead of viewing and subsequent tenancy start date.
• Ensure that all housing benefit and supporting financial data is in place ahead of viewing, that the viewing is undertaken timeously and assist the client with energy advice, specific tenant responsibilities, relevant use and management of any communal facilities and maintenance of associated garden ground, local T&RO information.
• Undertake signing of tenancy agreement and continue to assist the client access furnishings packages, any vouchers for redecoration, third sector assistance and any grant funding applications already identified in the access to housing process.
• Undertake a new tenant visit within agreed timescales to assist the client with early occupancy plan and ensure that applicant is given direct Housing Officer contact details.
• Process nominations to locally based RSL, within geographical patch, within agreed timescales in line with the joint nominations agreement.
• Maintain patch based lock up/ garage waiting lists, organise vacant repairs and allocate within agreed timescales.
• Process changes in tenancy and update computerised tenancy records.

Tenancy Management
• Ensure that any relevant support services and networks are in place to achieve tenancy sustainability objectives, for example supporting those with specific personal health or housing care needs.
• Work with colleagues within corporate debt and working 4U to achieve tenancy sustainability, maximise income, maximise entitlement to housing and welfare benefits and undertake actions which prevent eviction.
• Assist the tenant by working directly with colleagues within housing repairs and maintenance and taking ownership where there are ongoing property/ communal repair issues to ensure that they are undertaken within set timescales.
• Assist the tenant with rent abatement where there are ongoing issues which prevents occupancy or full use of all of the rooms available within their home
• Assist the tenant to access temporary accommodation or undertake decant to temporary alternative accommodation where there are works required to their home which prevent occupancy of the property.
• Carry out home visits to tenants included in regeneration/stock transfer areas to provide ongoing housing information and advice, complete housing applications and medicals as necessary. Arrange removal and co-ordinate associated services and process home loss payment requests within agreed timescales and procedures
• Attend case discussion with relevant internal or external partnering agencies in relation to personal housing support or care needs, or which support recognised corporate objectives such as, GIRFEC, Domestic Abuse, Corporate Parenting, Homelessness and prevention of Homelessness.
• Process request for mutual exchange within agreed process map and associated timescales
• Manage and process changes to tenancy request within Legislative requirements and timescales
• Work with colleagues within anti-social behaviour services to resolve neighbour complaints and pursue appropriate legal actions, service of legal tenancy notices required and provide supporting information to our ASIST service to assist them in the pursuit of other punitive legal measures such as ASBO, CRASBO as a result of serious anti-social behaviour.
• Carry out investigations into abandoned houses and lock-ups in accordance with legislation and WDC procedures, serving and recording all notices. Arrange and attend lock changes, drain down and security installation. Complete inventory. Liaise with Police, Social Work and other agencies throughout the investigation.
• Assist the Team Leader to monitor all Short Scottish Secure Tenancies within the geographical patch, attend case discussion and ensure appropriate support services are in place to assist the tenant aspire towards a Scottish Secure Tenancy and achieve tenancy sustainability objectives.
- Attend offer of housing visits to WDC tenants and undertake visual inspections of the property and other aspects of the tenancy agreement to ensure that a satisfactory reference can be provided without works being undertaken by WDC which would ordinarily result in a rechargeable repair being raised. The HO must follow the agreed process map/procedure by agreeing a review period or where the tenant should advise when required works are undertaken ahead of any offer proceeding. Sensitive or particularly complex cases should be referred to the Team Leader for decision.

- Attend the Pre-Termination visit, initially with a view to taking actions which may prevent the termination for negative reasons and which make the tenancy sustainable, by providing necessary tenant support in relation to ongoing issues. Undertake a visual inspection of the property and advise the tenant of evident rechargeable repairs at this stage, explain condition property should be left in, advise of rent due up to termination date and liaise with corporate debt colleagues to ensure that repayment plan is in place. Advise the tenant on access to housing process and supply and demand information which may prevent them accessing the live housing waiting list should they present to the council for housing at a future date.

- Undertake individual tenancy inspections where required to ensure that conditions of tenancy are being maintained satisfactorily and pursue appropriate informal and formal remedial actions, serving of notice etc., to bring resolve and which promote tenancy sustainability objectives. Where required, work with colleagues within legal services and prevention of homelessness services where eviction action is being progressed.

- Ensure that all customer contacts and actions taken are loaded to the appropriate shared IHMS modules to ensure cohesive case management history and information sharing.

- Assist in the WDC Corporate Welfare Fund claims process by undertaking home visits in relation to WDC tenants claiming Welfare Fund (Community Care Grant) assistance that are living in and experiencing financial crisis.

**Estates Management**

- Work in close partnership with local Tenants and Residents groups to ensure effective communication and resolution of tenancy and community issues. Attend surgeries/walkabouts with Tenants and Residents Groups and other agencies/sections as required promoting partnership working. Ensure estate action plan objectives are met. Attend out of hours meetings where HO attendance is required.

- Identify individual property or broader community/environmental works and projects for consideration and inclusion within the councils HRA Capital Programme.

- Work with colleagues within Your Communities in relation to any specific environmental issues or to identify environmental improvements which could be funded through YC objectives and/or which may compliment ongoing revenue and capital investment.

- Work with colleagues within Greenspace to ensure that open space HRA funded land is being maintained within agreed standards and timescales.

- Work with colleagues within Housing Maintenance and Roads and Transport to ensure that the general services and HRA funded pathways remain in good order or to be considered for inclusion in capital funded projects.
• Assist in the delivery of the capital programme on patch specific projects to ensure that appropriate tenant information and support is maintained by capital programmes reps throughout the duration of the project and those landlord requirements and obligations are being met.
• Ensure that reported bulk items for uplift are collected within agreed timescales and highlight issues to relevant line manager. Ensure that all fly tipped items are reported to street cleansing and if considered dangerous to be removed by the local caretaking team.
• Ensure that any HRA revenue funded environmental or common repairs works are undertaken timeously and within recognised works streams/ timescales and report issues to relevant housing operations line manager.
• Identify localised tenant or community/ environmental issues which affect the councils’ ability to re-let empty homes. Assist in remedial actions/ activity plans designed to maximise the councils’ income stream and promote community sustainability.
• Work positively with colleagues at all levels within housing operations to deliver a culture of continuous improvement within best value principles.
• Any other reasonable tasks or actions as instructed by the Service Manager relating to cohesive delivery of the housing operations service and high quality customer care.

7. PROBLEM SOLVING

The post holder is expected to undertake a multi-disciplined role within the new housing operations service delivery model. Tasks and actions cross cut key activities within access to housing, allocating houses void management, tenancy management and estates management.

The role has a case management approach to customer care and delivers “ownership” of customer enquiry and related problem solving, within the housing operations umbrella, regardless of its nature or origin.

The post holder is expected to resolve problems or situations generally by applying existing rules, procedures or instructions to the more difficult or challenging problems that arise. They must also ensure that outcomes provide a cohesive resolve and do not impact on the delivery of related services.

The post holder is required to resolve generally similar problems i.e. the post holder is required to interpret information and use these skills to decide which course of action to follow to find a solution. However, the post holder will require judgement to resolve problems particularly when dealing with clients either in person or by telephone. The nature, scope and cause of these problems will not always be apparent and will require the post holder to appraise the situation before attempting to deal with it.

The post holder is expected to refer more complex problems to the line manager or another senior member of staff. Procedures are in place to ensure that a senior member of staff can be contacted.
8. PLANNING

The post holder is responsible for planning day to day work.

The post holder is required to plan activities and appointments up to 3 months in advance.

Whilst the line manager will identify broader service priorities such as actions arising from priority work streams, legislative timescales and nationally and locally agreed performance targets for completion of work, (for example Annual Charter performance Indicators) it will be the post-holder who will plan and generate their daily and cyclical work programme activity within this broad framework.

9. ASSIGNMENT AND REVIEW OF WORK

The service has to be sufficiently responsive and flexible to meet the needs of both the client group and the demands of other departments and agencies.

Work is reviewed regularly by the line manager through team, performance management and regular one to one meetings. At these meetings workload and performance issues are assessed and actions agreed to continually improve performance within best value principles.

The workload can be both planned and responsive and is determined by the actions contained within priority workstreams, demands of individual clients and other departments and agencies.

10. COMMUNICATIONS AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Internal communications and working relationships:

The post holder is required to have the appropriate skills to communicate with elected members, senior staff, the line manager and other members of the team and with colleagues from other WDC services.

The postholder will be required to lead, persuade and ensure other professional and non-professional people and agencies to take particular actions to find resolution to customer needs and secure positive outcomes.

External communications and working relationships:

The post holder is required to have the appropriate skills to explain complicated, sensitive information to a client group - with a wide range of complex needs – in a way that they will understand. This can be information that the client does not necessarily want to hear. The post holder is required to have the skills to encourage clients to adopt courses of action they might otherwise not have been prepared to consider.

Communication takes place in the tenant’s home or within the community and also takes place by telephone and in one to one office interviews. Both in the office and at other locations, the post holder, whilst communicating sensitive information, must have regard for any change in a client’s behaviour which could present a possible risk of violence and the
post-holder must follow recognised Safe Systems of Work and good working practice.

The post holder is required to deal with other departments and statutory and voluntary agencies. This can be in relation to complex issues and as part of a multi-agency framework and broader housing and support partnership.

Within this multi-disciplined role, the post holder is required to develop positive working relationships, both internal and externally, within a customer focussed, cohesive housing and employability service delivery model.

11. DECISION MAKING

The post holder is required to make decisions in the course of a normal working day. Some of the work is predictable and will be dealt with using procedures and policy however there will be times when the post holder is required to use their initiative to deal with unanticipated problems/situations and making decisions to resolve at that given time.

There are established procedures in place to ensure management advice and guidance is available as and when required.

12. MOST CHALLENGING PART OF THE JOB

The most challenging part of the role is handling a broad range of housing related issues, often within competing targets and priorities and within a multi-disciplined role.

Clients seeking access to or already living within the social rented housing sector often have a range of complex housing, health and personal support needs, within a challenging socio-economic climate. This can present considerable challenge when seeking positive and sustainable housing solutions.

Competing customer and wider business demands will also present challenges to the post holder and good organisational, problem solving and decision making skills are essential.

13. GENERAL

Disclosure/PVG membership: None

Politically Restricted Post: No

The duties and responsibilities contained within this Post Descriptor are neither exclusive nor exhaustive as the postholder may be required to undertake other reasonably determined duties commensurate with the level and grade of the post without changing the
general character and nature of the post.

The Post Descriptor may be subject to revision, depending on the future needs of the post and the organisation, following appropriate consultation.

14. WDC TRAINING

West Dunbartonshire Council – Operates Skills Passports for all employees, which details the training available and timescales for undertaking courses. Skills passports are available via the Council’s Intranet Organisational Development & Change

- Skills Passport A – New Entrant Employee Passport
  Includes WDC Induction; Equality & Diversity; Data Protection (GDPR) & Security Awareness and relevant i-learn modules;
  Policy Reading: Code Of Conduct; ICT Information Security Policy and Acceptable Use Policy

- Skills Passport B – WDC Employee Passport
  Includes relevant i-learn modules

15. ROLE SPECIFIC TRAINING

Listed below are the training requirements which must be completed in order to undertake this position, with timescales where appropriate. Noting this is in addition to generic WDC training listed above.

No mandatory training required.
## SECTION 2: PERSON DESCRIPTOR

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<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Qualifications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Qualifications Level 5 or equivalent extensive experience of working within social rented housing sector.</td>
<td>Post Graduate CIH Housing Studies Degree in Housing Level 4 Diploma in Housing</td>
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<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
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<td>Extensive knowledge of the issues surrounding housing landlord functions for example income maximisation, rent collection, void management and allocating houses</td>
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<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Extensive experience of working within a social housing environment within either a local authority or Registered Social Landlord (RSL) setting.</td>
<td>Working knowledge of WDC Allocations, voids, estates management or rent collection activity.</td>
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<td>Strong working knowledge and understanding of relevant housing legislation, in particular the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Previous experience of dealing directly with the public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate experience and understanding of the support and service need(s) and socio economic challenges facing those seeking access to or already living within social rented housing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extensive experience of dealing directly with the public in a front facing role</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge and Skill</strong></td>
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<td>Good problem solving, decision making and verbal and written communication skills</td>
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<td>A proven ability of working on your own initiative and as part of a team to provide an efficient and effective wrap around customer focused service.</td>
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<td>Well-developed IT skills including the ability to use a variety of software programmes including, Word, Excel, Outlook and Access, use of mobile technology.</td>
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<td>Ability to work to tight or competing timescales and self- generate work activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent communication skills</td>
<td>Multi lingual – polish / Arabic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of housing legislation and housing service</td>
<td>Certification of courses attended relevant to post</td>
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<td><strong>Disposition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Highly motivated</td>
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<td>Ability to work under pressure to deliver positive results within a challenging business environment.</td>
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<td>Strong client and service delivery orientation</td>
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<td>Confident and positive approach to customer care and building strong customer relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well organised and disciplined</td>
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<td>Experience in dealing with challenging customers</td>
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