

WHERE
CAREERS
THRIVE

When potential
is unlocked,
talent *thrives*



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Job description and person specification

Housing Options Officer

Housing Solutions, Communities & Opportunities

Thank you for your interest in this role. Our vision at West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is: 'to make West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive'.

We truly stand by this and work hard every day to make this a reality, and at WNC it's about our people. People who thrive with ambition, bring new ideas, demand better ways of working, care about every detail, and who never shy away from a challenge.

Our culture is a gateway for new experiences. A place to forge new opportunities. To empower you in your career and unite you with like-minded people. When potential is unlocked, talent thrives.



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Purpose and impact:

To be part of a customer focused front line Housing Solutions Service providing timely and sometimes immediate housing advice to customers on a range of housing options, providing information, guidance and signposting on available benefits and services.

To focus on the prevention of homelessness and ensuring the council's statutory functions are carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation, To manage a complex caseload, including on the day homelessness, to determine and apply appropriate legislative processes through to final decision making.

Accountable to:

This role is accountable to the Housing Options Team Leaders. The role sits within the Housing Solutions Service, part of the Communities & Opportunities Directorate in West Northamptonshire Council.

Responsibilities:

1. Process and investigate homeless applications having a clear focus on working in collaboration with customers to positively prevent and relieve their homelessness, and making inquiries as necessary to determine what duty is owed to customers under the Housing Act 1996; as amended Homeless Reduction Act 2017. Ensure that advice and information on housing solutions is readily available and work in partnership with statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and signposting customers to specialist support services as required e.g. social care, health, advocacy services.
2. Provide a comprehensive approach to managing a complex caseload, dealing with vulnerable customers from point of contact, including on the day homeless duty, discharge of homelessness duty ensuring the council meets its obligations under the Housing Act 1996 and other relevant legislation. This will include working with partners such as Northamptonshire Children's Trust under the Joint Protocol for the assessment of 16/17 year olds to provide joined up services to prevent youth homelessness and manage planned moves from home; collaborative working with the Rough Sleeper Team to minimise rough sleeping; liaising with a range of accommodation providers such as private and exempt sector landlords, and processing housing register applications in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 Part VI.
3. Provide appropriate support to vulnerable persons with a variety of complex needs including mental health issues, unemployment, offending behaviour, family breakdown, substance misuse, behavioural issues, anti-social behaviour and support for young parents. Working in a challenging environment often requiring instant decision making and as part of a collaborative multi agency approach to complex case management, including involvement in key decision-making processes.
4. Have a detailed understanding of, and be able to implement, a wider range of legislation, procedures and policies relating to housing and welfare rights, including homelessness, landlord and tenant law, immigration and asylum, and matrimonial and family law. To provide specialist advice and information on this to customers with complex housing needs, working independently but within this framework.
5. Ensure all correspondence is responded to appropriately, all telephone enquiries meet protocols, undertake interviews and home visits within expected guidelines and procedures ensuring all necessary paperwork and records are effectively maintained in a timely manner and are accessible. Provide that all knowledge on relevant housing law and welfare rights etc are up to date to give

assurance that information and advice is given correctly, and associated casework data is collected lawfully.

6. Work with the Temporary Accommodation & Private Sector Access Team to negotiate and secure suitable emergency temporary accommodation for homeless households according to statutory requirements. Work proactively with homeless households to secure suitable housing solutions to help them to move on from temporary accommodation in a timely manner, working to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation.
7. Contribute to the development of local policies and procedures and promote and facilitate customer engagement and lived experience input to improve service delivery.
8. Respond to correspondence, answer telephone enquiries, undertake interviews and home visits (where necessary) ensuring all necessary paperwork and records are effectively maintained in a timely manner and are accessible.
9. To be available during office hours, and out of hours in line with the needs and demands of the service (both on a rota basis and in the event of an emergency).
10. To maximise personal productivity, minimise duplication and errors; and manage our information efficiently and securely to reduce risk, through effective use of Office 365 and our internal IT systems and applications.
11. Actively challenge and seek to eliminate any directly or indirectly discriminatory practice or behaviours.
12. Demonstrate awareness and understanding of other people's behavioural, physical, social and welfare needs and ensure that reasonable care is taken at all times for the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other persons.

This job description reflects the major tasks to be carried out by the post holder and identifies a level of responsibility at which they will be required to work. In the interests of effective working, the major tasks may be reviewed from time to time to reflect changing needs and circumstances. Such reviews and any consequential changes will be carried out in consultation with the post holder.

Person specification:

The requirements for the role are outlined below and will be part of the selection process. Each of the criteria listed below will be measured by:

(**A**) Application Form, (**T**) Test, (**I**) Interview, (**P**) Presentation, (**D**) Documentation.

Minimum levels of knowledge, skills experience and qualifications required for this job.

Skills and abilities:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Empathetic and able to deal with customers in a sensitive and appropriate manner in a demanding and challenging environment. Also, able to be firm and assertive when necessary.	E	A/I
Able to work effectively with customers, often vulnerable, to resolve complex problems.	E	A/I
Excellent customer care skills.	E	A/I/T
Good persuasive & negotiation skills.	E	A/I/T
Ability to interpret and explain complex legislation, policy and guidance, to a variety of audiences, and to make clear, consistent and often difficult decisions.	E	A/I
Accurate and attentive to detail.	E	A, I
An effective problem-solver with an organised and imaginative approach to work and the ability to manage difficult situations.	E	A/I
Ability to develop close professional relationships with colleagues and other professionals to generate positive outcomes for customers.	E	A/I
Ability to work well under pressure, prioritise work and meet tight deadlines.	E	A/I
Ability to work in a methodical manner, manage time, maintain accurate records, and respond promptly to enquiries.	E	A/I
Excellent written and verbal communications and use of English language, including the ability to communicate complex issues clearly and simply.	E	A/I /T
Ability to work on own initiative and as part of a team	E	A/I
Good IT skills with the ability to interrogate databases to record and retrieve customer information.	E	A/I
Demonstrate effective use of Office 365 (incl. Teams, OneDrive, etc.) or willingness to undertake training during the probation period	E	A/I/T
Able to work outside of office hours on a rota basis.	E	A, I

Knowledge:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
A current and deep knowledge and understanding of current housing law, such as the Housing Act 1996, Parts VI and VII, Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2012, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and immigration law as it applies to housing eligibility, relevant code of guidance and case law.	E	A/I

Knowledge of landlord and tenant law, matrimonial and family law and welfare benefits system.	D	A/I
An understanding and awareness of current challenges around housing and homelessness at a local, regional and national level.	E	A/I /T
Specialist homelessness knowledge in at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threatened Exclusion Private Rented Exclusion Domestic Violence Single People & Families 	E	A/I
An understanding of the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the need to ensure accurate data entry for the purpose of producing statistical returns.	E	A/I

Relevant experience:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Demonstrate a proactive approach to seeking appropriate housing solutions, including preventing homelessness and accessing the private rented sector.	E	A/I
Experience of working within a front-line service with high levels of demand, significant time pressure and conflicting priorities, including crisis management.	E	A/I
Experience of conducting thorough investigations with a focus on positive outcomes and preventing further escalation.	E	A/I
Experience of working collaboratively and proactively with other services and organisations to prevent homelessness and provide innovative solutions.	E	A/I
Experience of working in a homelessness and housing allocations environment	E	A/I
Experience of dealing with the public providing advice and/or support.	E	A/I

Education, training and work qualifications:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Educated to degree level or equivalent qualification or has significant experience and on-the job training in a related role	E	A, I, D
Evidence of continued professional and personal development.	E	A
Hold a professional housing qualification and member of the Chartered Institute of Housing or the ability to obtain the qualification	E	A

All appointments are subject to standard pre-employment screening. This will include identity, references, proof of right to work in the UK, medical clearance, and verification of certificates.

Additional pre-employment checks specific to this role include:

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.

Day-to-day in the role:

Hours:	37	Primary work base:	One Angel Square, Northampton
Job family band:	RT	Worker type:	Part-flexible
Salary range:	TBC	Budget responsibility:	None
People management responsibility:	None		

Working conditions & how we work:

We are open to discussions about flexible working.

This role has been identified as a part-flexible worker type, this means that you will be able to worker from other work locations and when not working from an office you will be working remotely for up to 3 days a week (including from home).

Our organisational values and behaviours

Everything we want to achieve for West Northants depends on having the right people in place and doing the right things and we want all colleagues to THRIVE, both personally and professionally. Our values and our behaviours framework underpin how we work and what partners and customers can expect from us. We want to do our very best for our residents, service users and businesses and for our staff – we want everyone to THRIVE.

T		we are honest, fair, transparent, and accountable. We can be trusted to do what Trust we say we will.
H	High Performing	we get the basics right and what we do, we do well. We manage our business efficiently.
R	Respect	we respect each other and our customers in a diverse, professional and supportive environment.
I	Innovate	we encourage curiosity, we are creative and seize opportunities to grow individually as an organisation and as an area.
V	Value	we continually strive for best practice and ways of improving existing procedures, practices and systems and thereby promoting efficiency and cost effectiveness
E	Empower	we believe in people, will listen, learn, and trust them to make decisions. We help people to realise their ambitions.

“Valuing colleagues as individuals and encompassing our different perspectives to deliver our collective ambitions. One West inclusive culture”

When potential is unlocked, talent *thrives*

Choose a career that offers you a true sense of achievement, fills you with pride and challenges you in a positive way, everyday.

The benefits of a career at WNC include:

- **People** are at the centre of everything we do. Without our people, we wouldn't be able to deliver services to the people in our community.
 - **Ambition** runs through everything we do at West Northants Council, we nurture and develop our people's ambition and willingness to succeed, to continually improve the service we provide to the community.
 - **Care** is at the heart of West Northants Council, we care in so many ways; seen and unseen, helping our colleagues and community to thrive.
 - **Flexibility** is key, we know work-life balance is critical to wellbeing, so we work hard to make sure our benefits package promotes and improves wellbeing; from annual leave, sick pay, family leave and flexible working, financial security offered by a local government pension scheme and life assurance, and discount schemes which make a difference to your day-to-day life, through to employee helplines offering free legal, health, financial and wellbeing advice and support.
- We want you to have balance and be happy.

