

Job description

Job title: Housing Advisor

Reports to: Manager of Advice Services

Salary: £35,998

Contract: permanent, full time (35 hours)

About us:

The Cardinal Hume Centre works to prevent and tackle youth and family homelessness. We:

- Provide a home with support for up to 39 young people
- Support children and families in housing or other need
- Offer housing and welfare rights advice to help people keep or find a stable home and to manage their money
- Advise and coach people to find work, learning or training
- Provide immigration advice to help people secure their legal right to remain in the UK to access homes, work and benefits.

Last year we helped over 1200 people including nearly 600 families and 230 children and young people, aiming to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty from a young age. Our approach is personalised, acknowledging the unique complexities of each individual through six key services: residential; family support, legal advice, employment, education and immigration advocacy.

The Centre is based within five minutes' walk from Parliament but works in an area where homelessness in nearly all its forms has increased. Around 3,600 children from Westminster are housed in temporary accommodation. Over 25% of children live in poverty. Families face unaffordable housing costs, a challenging labour market and rising levels of crime.

With an annual income in the region of £3.5 million, the Centre currently employs around 65 dedicated members of staff and around 45 volunteers.

About the role:

The overall purpose of this role is to provide a structured advice and information service to clients of the centre in housing law, housing options and aspects of welfare benefits that relate to housing and homelessness. It is also to provide second tier advice in housing law for generalist advisors and non-housing specialists in the centre.

Job description:

Advice Casework

1. To be responsible for an allocated number of specialist housing advice appointments.
2. To provide emergency housing advice to clients in crisis.

3. To work together with the other members of the Advice team, providing basic welfare rights advice and referring to our Welfare Rights Specialists when necessary.
4. To ensure that the centre is offering an efficient and effective advice service and be
5. responsible for the quality of housing law advice in that service.

Working Together

6. To work in partnership with clients, informing them and empowering them to problem-solve and make informed decisions about their future.
7. To work as part of the wider Advice and Assessment teams ensuring effective cover in services including dealing with emergencies when required.
8. To ensure clients are offered an integrated holistic service by working closely with the other teams in the centre.
9. To build and maintain good relationships with local authorities, housing associations other housing providers to help meet the aspirations of clients.
10. To build and maintain good relationships with other advice providers and partners in order to ensure up to date knowledge of each other's services and to work together with them to advocate for our clients' housing and welfare rights and to monitor unmet need locally so that this can be addressed.
11. To participate in the development and delivery of referral partnerships and outreach services, in order to reach the most vulnerable families and young people within the local community.

Leadership

12. To provide casework supervision and training in housing law to staff and volunteers in the centre, and co-ordinate our housing law service provision.
13. To provide line management to volunteers in line with centre policies.
14. To keep up to date in all relevant matters relating to housing and related social welfare law and cascade key information across the centre

Learning, reflecting and improving

15. To record all casework accurately and in a timely manner in line with our case management procedure.
16. To monitor outcomes against agreed standards and produce statistical information, reports and case studies when required.
17. To keep up to date with changes in housing and welfare law through reading, regular training and utilising the expertise of colleagues.
18. To actively seek feedback from clients, colleagues and stakeholders and to use this feedback to improve the service.
19. To contribute to the development of the service and of the wider centre by sharing learning and ideas to enable us to adapt our service to best meet the needs of young people and families.
20. To participate in monthly supervision meetings with line manager, with external supervisions and file audits and with regular performance development reviews.

21. To complete other training as required.

General

22. To promote a safe working environment for fellow workers, clients and visitors in line with the HASAW Act, and our Health & Safety policy, by reporting any safety hazards, concerns or ideas for improvement.
23. To promote a safeguarding culture, applying best practice to ensure the safety of all clients, particularly children and young people and adults who may be vulnerable
24. To carry out any other reasonable request asked by the management team.
25. To Input into the public policy work of the centre.
26. To complete the above in line with the Centre's agreed values and aims and in accordance with agreed policies and procedures
27. Safeguarding responsibilities of the role

Person specification

Essential:

1. Proven specialism in housing advice.
2. Experience and knowledge of housing law, including homelessness and allocations, security of tenure and possession proceedings, rights following relationship breakdown and disrepair.
3. Knowledge of current housing options open to homeless people.
4. A good understanding of welfare rights provision, particularly Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.
5. Extensive experience of direct work with vulnerable people, including those experiencing or threatened with homelessness.
6. An understanding of and empathy with the difficulties faced by homeless people and those living in insecure or unsuitable accommodation.
7. Experience of acting as an advocate for vulnerable clients and engaging with bureaucracy on their behalf.
8. Excellent communication skills, both verbal and written.
9. Strong skills in networking and the ability to build effective working relationships with partner agencies.
10. Willingness to work flexibly including some early evening and occasional weekend work
11. Experience of case management systems and processes.
12. Ability to set boundaries, challenge appropriately, and to manage conflict positively and constructively.
13. Willingness to learn new skills and share them with colleagues.
14. A strong commitment to the Centre's mission, values and behaviours; a strong belief in the value of every individual.

Desirable:

1. A legal qualification.
2. Detailed knowledge of welfare rights law and experience of welfare rights casework.
3. Experience of advising young people and families.
4. Experience of supervision of volunteers and/or paid staff.
5. Ability to speak a second language.
6. Experience of working in a charity or organisation working with vulnerable people

Our people - we believe each person matters:

Our clients

Our clients guide everything we do. We're here to help children, families and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, or clients who have urgent needs that can be met at the Centre and not elsewhere.

We value every person; this is central to our work

We seek to develop trusting relationships with our clients. We rely on them to help us improve and develop our services so we include them wherever possible in our work.

Our staff and volunteers

Our staff and volunteers are diverse in their backgrounds, and their skills and experience. Many have lived experience of the challenges our clients face. We are proud of our warm welcome and our team's commitment to support people facing disadvantage to escape the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

The Centre's [website](#) has more about our work including our [approach](#), our [plans](#) and our [values](#) and behaviours.