

INCOME & ACCOUNTS OFFICER

ROLE PROFILE

Based: The Stables, 1A Merchants Place, Reading RG1 1DT

Hours: Full Time - 37 hours per week

Contract: Permanent

Reporting to: Housing Team Leader

Remuneration: £25,000 FTE, plus benefits

Direct Reports: None

Job Purpose: To deliver a high quality rent collection and arrears recovery service, ensuring that income is maximised and arrears of rent and other charges are kept to a minimum which aids the sustainment of tenancies

Key Duties / Tasks

Income and Debt Management

- Have key responsibility for maintaining all aspects of the rent accounting process
- Responsible for ensuring all housing related income is collected from tenants and the recovery action for those customers in arrears
- Provide information and assistance to help clients claim and receive their full entitlement to welfare benefits, in particular Housing Benefit
- Ensure completion of Housing Benefit forms, change of circumstances, verifying documents and applications for direct payment deductions from Department of Work and Pension, as well as appeals for backdated claims where appropriate
- To action arrears cases in accordance with the Arrears Policy and Procedure, ensuring that timely, clear and comprehensive notes are always recorded
- Recalculate rent accounts accurately to reflect any changes in circumstances
- Provide manual calculations for Housing Benefit entitlements with clients where appropriate
- Take appropriate action to deal with breaches of debt-related tenancy conditions, including the serving of legal Notices and attendance at Court where required
- Provide clients with accurate and appropriate advice and information about amounts payable and what payment options are available to them
- Set up repayment agreements and ensure tenants adhere to these
- Ensure prompt and appropriate contact is made with customers who fall into arrears of rent and or tenant charge
- Negotiate affordable repayment arrangements with current and former tenants in respect of rent arrears, sending documentation confirming the terms of the agreement
- Complies fully with the requirements of the Arrears Pre-Action protocol
- Investigate credits and transfers on accounts and arrange prompt repayment where appropriate

- Assist Finance Manager with end of year procedures

Administration

- Ensure that full details of each customer contact are recorded as a file note or a case report on the database and that records are clear, accurate and concise
- Provide responsive and efficient telephone enquiry service to clients and Launchpad colleagues
- Produce arrears reports for staff fortnightly, managers monthly and quarterly
- Prepare rent statements regularly and individually for clients where needed
- Ensure entries are updated to the rent accounting software promptly
- Administration duties including certifying invoices, utility bills, updating spreadsheets and general correspondence
- Ensure accurate and prompt reporting of maintenance requests on database
- Completion of forms in respect of county court proceedings eg, eviction warrant applications, and request for possession date correspondence
- Ensure expenditure on property repairs, maintenance and fittings is in line with the budget, and liaise with Finance as required
- Responsible for rent collection and cash handling in line with the current procedure
- Conduct regular auditing to ensure accounts are accurate
- Participate in team meetings ensure that issues relating to the efficient and effective recovery of current and former arrears are identified, discussed and resolved where appropriate
- Assist with any other administrative duties with regard to Housing Management as identified by the Housing Team Leader

Tenancy Management

As required:

- Assist with tenancy sign ups, including preparation of tenancy agreements, and any void related work
- Assist with providing information for tenants, staff and management on the progress of repairs
- Assist in managing cases of Anti-Social Behaviour incidents and issuing of visitor restrictions to clients
- Work closely with key workers to support clients' tenancy sustainment, New Commitment Agreements, licence breaches and budgeting support
- Assist with all urgent Health & Safety concerns as well as maintenance coordination

Other

- Attend and participate in meetings as required
- Participate in projects as appropriate to personal skills and development opportunities
- Contribute as an individual and a member of a staff team towards the development of Launchpad Reading in terms of provision and policies
- Attend all core training as identified by Launchpad Reading and attend any further training as identified by the Head of Operations and/or Housing Team Leader
- Carry out any other reasonable duties as delegated by the Head of Operations and/or Housing Team Leader
- Operate within the framework of procedures and policies of Launchpad Reading

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

- Knowledge of Tenancy Management, Housing Legislation and best practice
- Thorough knowledge of arrears and income collection law and good practice
- Knowledge of County Court procedures
- Knowledge of homelessness and local issues
- Highly numerate with excellent attention to detail and accuracy of data entry
- Strong IT skills including Word, Excel, Outlook, Rents & Accounting Software
- Ability to manage database proficiently and learn new software
- Ability to handle challenging behaviour in others and manage conflict
- Tenacious and encouraging approach to problem solving – ‘can do’ attitude
- Excellent active listening skills and communication skills
- Effective communicator
- Ability to prioritise, work to deadlines and manage your own time
- Ability to interpret data and produce reports
- Highly persuasive and able to use initiative and motivate others
- Strong verbal and written communication skills, including reports and letters
- Ability to work as part of a small team, covering for other housing team staff depending on priorities
- Flexible and solution-focused approach to dealing with practical problems
- Committed to the principle of equal opportunities and demonstrate its implementation in carrying out day to day duties

Experience

- Substantial experience within an income management role, ideally within a general needs or supported housing setting, including:
 - managing rent accounts and arrears caseload
 - managing welfare and housing benefit claims
 - collecting rent from vulnerable tenants, face-to-face and by telephone
- Experience within a finance background
- Experience of administration, coordination and working to deadlines
- Experience of SDM as user (desirable).

Qualifications and Education/Training

- Educated to minimum GCSE level, including English and Maths
- Educated to A level standard or equivalent (desirable)
- Chartered Institute of Housing Qualification (desirable)
- Relevant vocational qualification (desirable)