
Your job

Job Title: Investigative Support Officer – Empty Homes

Service: Housing Strategy, Regulation & Improvement - Housing Enforcement Team

Grade: G6

Reporting to: Housing Standards Officer

This is to cover Empty Homes work which sits within the Housing Standards team for a period of 12 months to fulfil the GMCA Family leasing scheme priorities of bringing 16 empty properties onto the ELA.

The Empty Homes Officer will play a central role in delivering Wigan Council's Empty Homes Strategy, which aims to reduce the number of long term empty properties and bring them back into use as safe, affordable homes for residents. The postholder will utilise both local initiatives—such as the Empty Homes Investment Scheme—and regional funding through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Empty Homes & Leasing / Family Leasing Programmes. The post holder will co-ordinate the implementation of a number of available options to empty home owners to support lease-and-repair models for repurposing empty homes into temporary or settled accommodation.

The role contributes to wider strategic goals within Wigan's Empty Homes Strategy, which seeks to improve neighbourhoods, increase affordable housing supply, support community wealth building, and address the negative impacts long term empty homes have on local areas.

The post holder will engage with home owners to effectively communicate what options we have available to support the regeneration of empty properties and where applicable will also utilise the necessary enforcement tools and powers in cases whereby the property is having a negative impact on the surrounding community whereby engagement from the owner is not forthcoming.

The post holder will use current available investigatory tools to trace home owners where contact may not be forthcoming and will refer relevant cases to the genealogy service where applicable to pursue further lines of enquiry.

You will have good knowledge of Housing legislation, debt recovery and legal case file building. You will provide support in relation to enforcement of legal processes that may be identified to help the Council achieve their desired outcomes and to ensure compliance.

Additionally, you will coordinate intelligence gathering for the team relating to empty properties, ensuring relevant information is cascaded to stakeholders. Where the team are aware of information that is pertinent to other partners / departments, you will ensure that it is referred over to them in a timely manner whilst complying with legal requirements.

As an Investigative Support Officer, your main role will be investigating Private Sector Housing enquiries relating to empty properties.

You will support the wider team with the enforcement of rogue landlords who are operating properties with criminal intentions.

Where applicable the post holder will arrange work in default relating to empty properties and will ensure that the costs associated with the work are recorded as land charges to ensure recovery.

You will be enthusiastic and self-motivated, with the ability to operate effectively as a member of a team and be able to undertake lone working, working flexibly, organising appointments and accurately following working procedures. You will use your own initiative to breakdown problems, ask the right questions and to take the appropriate action. You will have the ability to look at processes and determine the most effective manner to action them, proposing more constructive and time efficient practices.

Mandatory Statement

The Council is committed to complying with European General Data Protection regulations (UKGDPR) and meeting the requirements of the Information Commissioner's office (regulating data protection compliance

in the UK). It is your responsibility to ensure that the work you undertake is compliant with the General Data Protection regulations.

Wigan Council is an active, strong, and committed corporate parent. As a priority, all employees have a responsibility towards the children we look after and care leavers, not just those employed by the Children's Directorate.

In this job you will:

In the next 12 months, you will:

- Engage with owners of empties properties with a view to fulfilling the GMCA Family leasing scheme priorities of bringing 16 empty properties onto the ELA.
- Coordinate the recovery of debt associated with Housing Act notices and work in default.
- Use the systems available to you in order to gather relevant intelligence to assist in the investigation and enforcement to bring properties back into use.
- Maintain accurate records of investigations and inspections to ensure information produced can be relied upon to demonstrate performance and delivery.
- Assist in the case preparation and logistical arrangements of inviting individuals in for formal PACE interviews where necessary.
- Assist in the preparation of evidence for legal proceedings on regulatory and criminal offences.
- Obtain evidence relevant to offences being investigated where necessary.
- Assist in the investigation of cases and manage risk, involving assessment, planning and delivery of interventions in order to protect the safety and well-being of residents.
- Support the development of a strong culture of collaboration within the team and with key stakeholders, working flexibly and encouraging and supporting others to do the same to ensure the consistent delivery of high quality, efficient and effective operational services.
- Coordinate work in default where necessary and take the necessary steps to recovery the debt associated with this work.
- Input of relevant intelligence gathered by the Housing Standards Enforcement Team onto Intelligence systems for dissemination.

- Ensure you operate within GDPR guidelines by regularly reviewing data held and destroying information in line with retention schedules

On an ongoing basis you will:

- Liaise with Housing Enforcement colleagues, and the Council's Legal Team, helping to prepare a case file of evidence to be considered for potential criminal prosecution. Support with interviews of the accused persons conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).
- Work collaboratively with a range of Council teams and partners to provide the most appropriate outcomes for residents and partners.
- Keep up to date on legislation relevant to the role, through attending the relevant training courses and liaising with partners, including landlord/letting agent trade bodies.
- Monitor and complete budgetary reports to managers.
- Ensure you operate within GDPR guidelines by regularly reviewing data held and destroying information in line with retention schedules.
- Coordinate intelligence gathered to help identify areas of risk to both the Council and the community.
- Monitor internal and government databases for compliance of legislation.
- Use all available sources to help identify offences relevant to the role.

In this job you will need:

You must be able to demonstrate the following essential requirements:

- 5 GCSEs Grade C or above including English Language and Mathematics or equivalent relevant qualifications which demonstrate literacy and numeracy.
- Experience of working with customers in a front-line capacity and ideally with private landlords/letting agents.
- Experience of budgets and income/expenditure.
- Good Knowledge of investigatory requirements and evidence gathering.
- Knowledge of the private rented sector and the challenges in relation to demand, affordability and the management of properties.

- An awareness of housing legislation, policies and procedures, key operational issues and good practice relevant to the sector, with the ability to understand and apply pertinent legislation – such as the Housing Act 1988 and 2004, and the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 – within your role.
- Experience or good knowledge of working under Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.
- Knowledge of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- The ability to respond and adapt quickly to emerging legislation and changes in policy.
- Have proven influencing and negotiating skills which lead to successful outcomes.
- Excellent interpersonal skills which allow you to quickly establish relationships and build trust across a range of customers, partners and stakeholders.
- The ability to raise awareness of, and assert, best practice within the sector to both private tenants and landlords, encouraging both parties to act responsibly and fulfil their obligations.
- The resilience to deal with difficult situations and challenging behaviours, with an ability to take ownership of problems, to use initiative and to actively seek solutions wherever possible.
- The ability to work flexibly in line with the demands of the service and to plan and prioritise workload to meet deadlines.
- Excellent approach to customer care when dealing with customers, landlords and other stakeholders.
- A desire to deliver the best outcomes for a range of customers.
- Strong communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Strong administration and organisational skills, with excellent attention to detail.
- Good general IT skills.
- Current valid driving licence with the ability to travel as required using own transport.

Our Culture

For us, it's not just about all we achieve as an organisation, but how we do it. Therefore, all employees are expected to display our **TeamWigan** behaviours.

Be Positive	“ Take pride in all that you do and support and develop yourself and others. ”
Be Accountable	“ Be responsible for making things better, enabling change and supporting improvement. ”
Be Courageous	“ Be open to doing things differently and working collaboratively with others. ”
Be Kind	“ Be helpful, generous and thoughtful towards yourself and others. ”