   

**Welfare Rights & Money Advice Officer**

**Part time 17.5 hours per week**

**Fixed Term for 1 Year**

**Candidate Information Pack**

**November 2022**



**Information Pack Contents**

* Background and Operating Environment of the POLHA Group
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Downloads of key management documents are available to you available from the Port of Leith Housing Association website [www.polha.co.uk](http://www.polha.co.uk)

**Background and Operating Environment of the POLHA Group**

**Introducing the POLHA Group**

The Port of Leith Housing Association (POLHA) Group is made up of four entities: the registered social landlord and charity, Port of Leith Housing Association (the parent organisation), and three wholly-owned subsidiary companies: a private rented sector letting agent, Persevere Developments Ltd (PDL), a community initiatives / social enterprise company, Quay Community Improvements CIC (Quay CI), and a multi-trades repairs and maintenance company, TB Mackay Energy Services (TBMES).

POLHA is the largest social landlord in Leith, owning and managing almost 3,000 homes, of which approximately 90% are for social rent through the Association and 10% are for mid market rent through Persevere Developments.

There are significant opportunities over the years up to 2025 for the Group to play an important role in the ongoing regeneration and development of Leith and in the wider Edinburgh waterfront, within Western Harbour and Granton in particular. As core areas of operation, the Group is extremely well placed to continue playing a very active part creating new and large scale mixed-use and mixed-tenure communities and where new services will be developed for ongoing management, maintenance and support linking together both existing and new communities in future.

There are also opportunities through collaboration and partnership working with other RSLs operating in the City and including through the newly formed ARCHIE alliance of smaller independent housing organisations to be working more closely together, and benefiting through sharing knowledge and information, undertaking joint procurement activity to secure improved value for specific goods and services, and improving the range of service offering to tenants and other stakeholders in future.

It is also a period of significant change and challenge, most notably from the continued roll out of Universal Credit, from the uncertainty and the impact of Brexit, and from the inevitable disruption to residents and businesses due to the planned extension of the tram line to Newhaven being constructed over the next three years.

**Port of Leith Housing Association (POLHA)**

Port of Leith Housing Association was founded as a registered social landlord in 1975 in response to a growing need for better management arrangements for a deteriorating stock of older tenement properties and for investment in building, and managing, new affordable housing for the growing population. Initially, its existence focused largely on landlord responsibilities, building and providing good quality social rented properties plus a small number of shared ownership properties. The Association, which is also a registered charity, has grown continuously and developed its strategic thinking to apposition where it now recognises its role and position as a leader and influencer in developing high quality “places” in which to live, including improving the available choices and access to affordable housing and support for independent living.

This has led to the creation of the subsidiary companies, Persevere Developments Ltd in 2010, and Quay Community Improvements in 2016, and the acquisition of an existing company, TB Mackay Energy Services, in 2019, reinforcing the increased scope of the POLHA Group operations more widely within the community of Leith and north Edinburgh.

The Association has historically seen its operations as being based largely in the area of the former Burgh of Leith and wider north Edinburgh. It now operates in an arc from the east edge of the Cramond district of Edinburgh through the top of Leith Walk and back to Portobello in the north east of the City.

Edinburgh has an acute need and high demand for affordable housing. In a very pressured housing market, access to affordable housing continues to be very challenging for households with incomes at or below average levels. Operating in Leith and north Edinburgh, POLHA regularly receives a much higher than average number of bids through Edindex for each available social let; in 2019 averaging 320 per property compared to a city-wide average of 230. Demand for mid market rented housing also continues to be very high.

The Scottish Government has a target for at least 50,000 more affordable homes to be delivered by 2021. The City of Edinburgh Council has a target of 20,000 new affordable homes to be built over 10 years by 2027 which will require a sustained effort and focus of public subsidy (Housing Association Grant) and private investment in order to continue providing both new social and mid market rented homes required over this period. As part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, a renewed focus has been placed on completing the regeneration of the Edinburgh waterfront which, in Granton and Western Harbour in particular, presents a major opportunity for creating larger scale new mixed-use and mixed-tenure neighbourhoods, including a very significant number of new homes.

The Association is committed to working towards delivering excellent services. Through continuous review and focus on improvements to performance, the Association strives to improve both value for money and levels of customer satisfaction. Through the Customer Connect Group, and other feedback mechanisms, the Association will continue to improve its understanding of what our customers’ priorities are and the actions necessary to further improve performance. Independent verification of the quality of our services will be provided through various mechanisms, including through Quality Scotland / EFQM, Investors in People, Tenant Participation Advisory Service and Investors in Diversity accreditation.

**Persevere Developments Ltd (PDL)**

In 2010, Persevere Developments Ltd was established as a wholly owned subsidiary, to enable the Association to increase the range of affordable housing options available. It has achieved this through extending operations into the private rental sector and providing (mid market) rental opportunities to individuals and families in work on lower income levels who are not eligible for social rented properties or who find open market housing costs for renting (or owning) unaffordable.

The operating model for PDL is that it currently leases properties for mid market and rent from the Association. The Association provides management services to PDL for the properties.

Within the private rented sector in the City, demands continues to outstrip supply resulting in open market rented housing costs being very high, and currently at levels averaging at over 55% of the total household income. This leaves a growing section of the population struggling to access and afford either private rental housing or owner occupation. It can therefore be confidently predicted that there will continue to be a significant demand for the mid market rent homes provided by PDL for the foreseeable future.

**Quay Community Improvements CIC (Quay)**

In 2016, Quay was incorporated as the Association’s second wholly owned subsidiary, in order to continue to support its ‘wider role’ work to improve both the local environment and social fabric of the area at a time when financial resources from both national and local government to support these have been diminishing.

Quay has been established as a social enterprise to deliver commercial services for profit which, in turn, will be reinvested back into the community. Its initial focus was to develop the commercial elements of its remit and it started by providing stair cleaning services. With the ongoing regeneration under way in the Edinburgh waterfront, where substantial new mixed-use neighbourhoods are being created, there are significant new opportunities for Quay to provide services in support of the Group’s ‘placemaking’ ambitions. Having also supported the creation of ARCHIE (the Alliance of Registered Co-operative and Housing Associations, Independent in Edinburgh) in 2018 bringing eight housing organisations into a framework for more collaborative joint working, there is potential for Quay to extend its social enterprise activity supporting communities throughout north Edinburgh and more widely.

**TB Mackay Energy Services Ltd (TBMES)**

A very significant part of the service offer to tenants concerns the physical quality of the home, that it is in a good state of repair and provides a safe and secure place to live. Following a competitive tendering process undertaken four years ago, the Association entered into a new partnership with TBMES as service provider for both responsive repairs and gas servicing, which has resulted in closer collaboration to improve both the service offer and the quality and cost of what is provided.

A key strategic risk for the Association is that the benefits of this collaboration could potentially be lost through either TBMES not securing the contract again and / or it being taken over by another commercial business which could result in a poorer service offer and quality / cost to the Association and its customers.

Through joint agreement the Association has, in 2019, acquired the whole TBMES business as a going concern, including all assets and existing contracts with a range of other public, private and RSL clients to deliver a multi-trades repairing and improvement service. This strategic acquisition provides comfort mitigating a key risk to the Association more effectively in future and provides the opportunity to further improve systems and processes for both repairs and maintenance functions for the Group, offering greater value for money and improved customer satisfaction levels in future.

**Vision and Mission**

The **POLHA Group Vision** is: Our communities are brilliant.

The **POLHA Group Mission** is: To make a positive impact on people’s lives in Leith and north Edinburgh by providing affordable homes and services and creating brilliant communities.

**Values**

We will demonstrate the following **POLHA Group Values** when delivering our work:

* **Inclusion** – means we work together and actively welcome everyone’s contribution.
* **Honesty** – means we are open, trust each other and deliver what we promise
* **Respect** – means we value everyone’s opinion, listen to each other and challenge positively.
* **Support** – means we are approachable and do what we can to help
* **Innovation** – means we share ideas about how to continue improving our services.

**Guidance on next steps with the recruitment and selection process**

Applicants should submit an online application which includes details of their present salary and benefits package.

Your application should also include a supporting statement which demonstrates your suitability, competence and experience to perform the role of Welfare Rights & Money Advice Officer with specific reference to the Job Description and Person Specification.

Please supply full contact details of two referees whom we may approach, one of which should be your present employer and the other a previous employer. The Association normally only takes up references for the candidate selected for appointment; however, we may contact them prior to inviting you to attend an interview unless you specify otherwise.

**Completed applications should be received by: Tuesday, 6 December 2022.**

e-mail to**:** [**recruitment@polha.co.uk**](mailto:recruitment@polha.co.uk)

**Please note we do not accept CVs. No agencies**

The information provided by you on the application form and any supplementary forms will be used for the purpose of selection, recruitment and any further subsequent employment administration if the application is successful. If successful, the application form will be held on manual and computerised personnel systems. If you are unsuccessful the information will be retained for one year then destroyed.

**Key Dates**

To assist applicants to plan their availability for the selection process the following key dates should be noted:

**Applications should be received by Tuesday, 6 December 2022.**

**Interviews will take place week commencing 12 December 2022.**

Applicants invited for interview will be notified by telephone after the shortlisting process and a confirmation letter/email will then be sent with further details pertaining to the interview.

**Employment Policies**

The Association is a ‘Disability Confident Employer’ symbol holder and fully complies with the criteria set by JobCentre Plus. You are therefore asked if you consider yourself to have a disability to please regard this as a positive opportunity to let us give you any help you believe you may require by outlining any aspects of the post which may present some difficulty, and any suggestions you may have for overcoming them. The Association’s Equality and Diversity Policy provides more information. The Association’s office accommodation is accessible to all.

As part of the selection process for the vacancy you will be asked to provide, in confidence, evidence of entitlement to work in the UK.

**Interview Expenses**

Where applicants are required to travel to attend interview the Association will reimburse reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred within the United Kingdom. All expense claims other than car mileage must be supported by receipts.

**ADD JOB DESCRIPTION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Job Title:** | Welfare Rights and Money Advice Officer |
| **Team:** | Tenant Advice Service |
| **Reports to:** | Tenant Advice Service Team Leader |
| **Direct Reports:** | None |
| **Salary Range:** |  |
| **JD Last Reviewed** | October 2022 |
| **Role Last Evaluated** |  |

**OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE**

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| --- |
| The primary purpose of the role holder will be the effective delivery of the following technical/specialist functions:   * provide high quality, specialist welfare benefits advice and advocacy to our tenants to ensure that income is maximised, and tenancies sustained * provide high quality, specialist debt counselling, debt adjusting and budgeting advice to our tenants to ensure that income is maximised, and tenancies sustained. * promoting the service and working in partnership to resolve customers’ issues   The role holder will be expected to deliver their duties while behaving in line with the organisation’s stated values. |

**CORE AREAS OF WORK & ACCOUNTABILITIES**

| **Areas of Work** | **Key Accountabilities** (you will be held accountable for) |
| --- | --- |
| **Welfare Right Advice Provision** | * Effectively giving accurate benefit advice and information on welfare rights to tenants * Effectively and accurately carrying out checks on tenants’ benefits * Effectively keeping up to date with relevant legislative and regulatory changes * Effectively liaising with the housing management, sheltered and tenant support teams to promote the sustainability of tenancies and help address rent arrears issues |
| **Appeal Support Provision** | * Effectively acting as advocate for customers making appeals against benefit decisions |
| **Debt counselling and debt adjusting** | * Giving an effective and accurate range of advice and information on debt management, debt adjusting and budgeting to tenants in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements and best practice * Effectively liaising with other advice and support agencies to resolve customers’ benefit and money management issues * Keeping up to date timeously with relevant legislative and regulatory changes and advising on and implementing any necessary operational changes |
| **Service Promotion** | * Effectively promoting the service and partnership working to external agencies and our customers |
| **Business Management** | * Effectively collecting and collating appropriate records and monitoring information * Effectively and timeously providing reports to management on progress and performance as required |
| **Partnership working** | * Effectively participating in and promoting partnership working to resolve issues, improve customer service delivery and develop best practice * Effectively representing the Association at networks, external working groups and forums as required |
| **Tenant and customer participation** | * Encouraging and supporting opportunities for tenants and other customers to influence service and performance improvement |
| **Health and Safety Management** | * Taking reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves and others, in accordance with the organisation’s policies and procedures |

| **WELFARE RIGHTS OFFICER PERSON SPECIFICATION** | **E** | **D** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **KNOWLEDGE:** |  |  |
| Thorough knowledge of welfare benefits; welfare reform and best practice in welfare benefits advice  Thorough working knowledge of debt management/counselling; financial inclusion; welfare benefits; welfare reform and best practice  Full understanding of policies and procedures in relation to these services | x  x  x |  |
| **ABILITIES/COMPETENCIES** |  |  |
| ***Personal Effectiveness*** |  |  |
| Able to positively challenge at all levels of the organisation | x |  |
| Ability to build and sustain effective working relationships | x |  |
| Able to work on own initiative interpreting policy/procedures to resolve problems | x |  |
| Excellent interpersonal skills - able to build rapport with tenants and a good working relationship with internal/external colleagues | x |  |
| ***Functional/Technical*** |  |  |
| Able to work effectively as part of a team contributing to team discussion and overall team performance | x |  |
| Effective organisational skills, able to plan own work and deliver to targets | x |  |
| Well-developed communication skills (oral and written), able to draft clear, detailed but succinct records and letters | x |  |
| Able to contribute to policy and procedure development and identifying ways of improving the services provided | x |  |
| Able to produce accurate reports within an agreed timescale | x |  |
| Able to use Microsoft Word, Outlook and Excel effectively | x |  |
| Able to use QL Management System or similar |  | x |
| Able to use AdvicePro for case management and reporting | x |  |
| **PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES:** |  |  |
| Passionate about delivery of excellent customer service and follows principle of getting it right first time | x |  |
| A flexible and adaptable approach interested in continuous improvement of the service. | x |  |
| Inquisitive mind that follows problems through to their conclusion | x |  |
| Can work unsupervised | x |  |
| Self-motivated | x |  |
| Takes personal responsibility for decisions and actions | x |  |
| Committed to living the values of the Association | x |  |
| **TRACK RECORD/EXPERIENCE**  Experience (typically 2yrs+) in a welfare rights and money advice role or similar |  |  |
| x |  |
| **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT/ QUALIFICATIONS** |  |  |
| Good general level of education equivalent to Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework level 6 | x |  |
| **PROFESSIONAL BODY MEMBERSHIP** |  |  |
| None required |  |  |
| **OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ROLE**  None |  |  |
|  |  |

**Summary of the Association’s Total Reward Package**

**Salary:**

Grade 4 £31,747 – £38,801 pro rated (depending on skills and experience)

**Hours:**

**17.5 per week**

**Leave:**

The leave entitlement for this post is 23 days pro rata (increasing annually to a maximum of 25 days) and 12 public holidays in a full year.

**Sickness Absence Provision**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If you are unfortunate enough to become ill and depending on your length of service, our sickness absence policy provides you with: | |
| **Length of Service** | **Entitlement** |
| Under 26 weeks service | Up to 1 week full pay |
| Over 26 weeks but less than 1 years service | Up to 4 weeks full pay and 4 weeks half pay |
| Between 1 and 2 years service | Up to 12 weeks full pay and 12 weeks half pay |
| Between 2 and 3 years service | Up to 16 weeks full pay and 16 weeks half pay |
| Over 3 years service | Up to 26 weeks full pay and 26 weeks half pay |

**Notice Period**

8 Weeks

**Professional Subscriptions**

The Association pays for one professional subscription fee if you are required to be a member of a professional institute or association that has a direct link to your job.

We aim to ensure that all members of staff have the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to be successful in their jobs and to fulfil their career potential.

Childcare Vouchers

You may be entitled to get tax-free childcare, please see link below for details:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-tax-free-childcare>

**Cycle to Work Scheme**

The Cycle to Work scheme offers tax incentives that enable you to enjoy serious savings on the price of a new bicycle (plus related safety equipment such as a helmet and a set of lights. You will have the opportunity to lease the bicycle of your choice via a tax-efficient salary sacrifice scheme.

**Family Friendly Policies**

We have a range of family friendly policies to allow staff to balance work with other aspects of their lives. These include flexi time, special leave provisions, sabbatical leave, flexible working arrangements and remote access via home PCs where appropriate.

**Maternity / Paternity / Shared Parental Leave / Adoption Provisions**

The Association pays maternity, paternity and adoption leave: some of these benefits are enhanced beyond statutory entitlements.

**Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

The Association has an independent, 100% confidential EAP service, offering professional and impartial advice, information and counselling on a range of issues.

**Occupational Health Service**

The Association works with an independent occupational health service provider who provide independent support and advice for staff who have an illness or medical condition affecting their ability to work. Referrals are made through the Corporate Services team.

**Contribution towards the Cost of Glasses for VDU Use**

Where you have been assessed as a VDU user, the Association will contribute towards the cost of glasses.

**Guidance on Completing Your Application**

We wish to ensure that we do not ask for any unnecessary information which may suggest discrimination.

**Education and Training:** Please give us enough details to assess your attainments in relation to the post for which you are applying. We may wish to see any certificates or qualifications you hold. We will ask you to bring them if you are invited to attend for interview.

**Employment Record:** Please give as much detail as you feel gives us an accurate picture, both about the type of work you are/were doing and the responsibilities you have had. Please start with the most recent, supplying exact dates where possible. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

**Supplementary Information**: Please detail any further experience or information relevant to the post for which you are applying, bearing in mind the information you have been given about the post.

**References**: References will only be taken up if you are offered a post. Please indicate if you do not wish your referee(s) to be contacted without your consent. No offer of employment will be confirmed by the Association until satisfactory references have been received.

**General Information**: You are asked to tell us if you are related to a current or former member of the Association’s staff or Board. This is so that we can demonstrate that any appointment has been made on merit and in accordance with recruitment and selection policy and procedures.

You are asked to tell us if you are currently eligible for employment in the UK. This is so that we can ensure compliance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 which requires organisations to ensure individuals to whom they are offering employment have permission to work in the UK eg they hold a British passport/birth certificate/work permit etc. If appointed, you will be required to produce such evidence.

**Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974:** Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate on the grounds of a spent conviction. However, some types of jobs are exempt from this Act – this means you have to disclose spent convictions as well as unspent ones. Please be aware of your rights and responsibilities when disclosing convictions.