



# NO HOMELESS VETERANS

## Toolkit

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## **Contents**

Introduction	<b>3</b>
The Toolkit	<b>3</b>
No Homeless Veterans Campaign	<b>3</b>
Why Might a Veteran Experience Homelessness?	<b>5</b>
Identifying Veterans	<b>7</b>
Who Is a Veteran?	<b>7</b>
Why Identify Someone’s Veteran Status?	<b>7</b>
What Questions Should We Be Asking?	<b>8</b>
How to Identify Veterans?	<b>8</b>
Armed Forces Covenant	<b>10</b>
What is the Armed Forces Covenant?	<b>10</b>
Housing and the Armed Forces Covenant	<b>11</b>
Strategic Approach	<b>13</b>
How Can We Develop a Strategic Approach to Tackling Homelessness That Considers Veterans?	<b>14</b>
Bespoke Advice and Information	<b>16</b>
Advice and Information	<b>16</b>
What Advice and Information Should You Be Providing?	<b>17</b>
Preventing Homelessness Amongst Veterans	<b>18</b>
Preventing Homelessness	<b>18</b>
Homelessness	<b>21</b>
Personal Housing Plans	<b>21</b>
When a Veteran is Experiencing Homelessness	<b>22</b>
What Can We Do to Improve Our Approach?	<b>23</b>
Social Housing	<b>23</b>
Allocations Policies	<b>23</b>
What the Law Says	<b>24</b>
What You Can Do	<b>26</b>
No Homeless Veterans Toolkit	<b>2</b>

Accessing Social Housing	28
Low Cost Home Ownership	29
Development of Social Housing	31
New Tenants	32
Supported Housing	33
What is Supported Housing?	33
Specialist Veteran Supported Housing	33
Asking the Veteran Question	35
Support Planning	36
Move-On	36
Staff Knowledge and Awareness	37
What Can Your Organisation Do as an Employer?	38
Support for Veterans	39
Appendix 1: Checklist	43
Appendix 2: About Homeless Link	46

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The Toolkit**

This toolkit has been written and compiled by Homeless Link to provide a valuable resource to Local Housing Authorities, Housing Associations, and Supported Housing Providers to enable them to both better identify veterans and to meet the housing and wider support needs of veterans and their families.

The toolkit has been created to be used alongside the self-audit tools. By completing the audit tool you will be provided with a baseline position on how well you are identifying and meeting the housing needs of veterans. This then links into the toolkit to provide you with any statutory requirements, how your approach could be improved, and examples of best practice and innovation.

The toolkit is divided into a number of sections to make it easily accessible and enable you to access the information and advice that is most relevant to your organisation.

The toolkit aims to:

- Help frontline housing staff to be able to identify veterans.

- Give frontline housing staff all the information they need to understand and meet statutory and best practice standards around veterans and their housing needs.
- Outline clearly the actions that need to be taken in order to carry out their roles and be compliant with all statutory guidance.
- Give examples of best practice and recommendations as to how organisations can go 'above and beyond' in order to support veterans and work towards ending veterans' experiences of homelessness.

## 1.2 No Homeless Veterans Campaign

The No Homeless Veterans campaign provides information and resources to help Local Authorities, Housing Associations, and Supported Housing Providers identify and respond to the needs of homeless veterans.

The No Homeless Veterans Campaign, led by Cobseo (Confederation of Service Charities) Housing Cluster, is working to ensure veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are identified and steered to the support they're entitled to, as quickly as possible. The campaign is funded by FiMT, coordinated by Stoll and is being delivered alongside Homeless Link and The National Housing Federation.

Most veterans make a smooth transition from military to civilian life – but some ex-Service personnel, especially younger veterans and early Service leavers, do experience homelessness.

Despite the well-intentioned commitments in the Armed Forces Covenant, many veterans are in inappropriate accommodation, sofa surf, or live in hostels which are not suitable for their needs. Some end up experiencing homelessness on the streets.

Help to find appropriate housing is available for former Service personnel, but sometimes people miss out because they aren't identified as a veteran or those helping them do not have access to all of the information that they may need.

Research by the University of Stirling indicates that less than half of Service leavers have their housing needs sorted out before they leave the Services. Although veterans who receive support are typically positive about support from charities and Local Authorities, a more coordinated approach between Local Authorities, Housing Providers, homelessness charities, and veterans' organisation is needed, to ensure veterans do not continue to slip through the net.

Veterans can be particularly vulnerable, and it is thought that every year some 3-4,000 veterans need urgent support to find accommodation, many believe that they are low down on priority lists.

At any time between 2% and 3% of those accessing homelessness services in England are veterans. Every year there are up to 400 veterans who are sleeping rough.

The No Homeless Veterans Campaign aims to reduce veterans' homelessness to as close to zero as possible.

We want to ensure that veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are identified and steered to the support they're entitled to, as quickly as possible.

We want to make sure all Local Authorities, homelessness charities and Housing Associations have the needs of veterans embedded in their strategies, and have the tools they need to identify veterans and meet their needs.

## **2. Why Might a Veteran Experience Homelessness?**

The vast majority of Veterans make a smooth transition into civilian life upon leaving the Armed Forces, with relatively low numbers experiencing homelessness or going on to sleep rough.

Statutory guidance in relation to housing and homelessness sets out more generous guidelines around priority need for veterans and makes greater provision for veterans in relation to allocations guidance and legislation. Furthermore, there are 10,200<sup>1</sup> units of accommodation which are ring-fenced specifically for veterans in urgent housing need, notwithstanding the fact that veterans can access mainstream housing and homelessness services as well. This suggests that with a focused approach on meeting the housing needs of veterans, it is possible to reduce and possibly end veterans' experiences of homelessness.

However, we know that veterans and their families do experience homelessness – and this can be due to a variety of reasons and while may happen following discharge, it may also happen at a later point in time.

The causes of homelessness will largely be the same as for any other person faced with the experience of homelessness. There are, however, a few circumstances specific to a veteran's life that can increase the likelihood of them experiencing homelessness.

Reasons for homelessness amongst veterans and their families can include:

- Poorly managed or unexpected transition out of the Armed Forces.
- Unrealistic expectations of the available housing options.
- Support needs, including mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder.

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<sup>1</sup> Doherty, R., Cole, S., Robson, S. (2018) Focus On: Armed Forces Charities' Housing Provision. Directory of Social Change: London.

- Relationship breakdown.

### **Terry's Story**

Terry joined the Armed Forces, following the death of his brother who died aged 18 while serving in the Parachute Regiment, in Northern Ireland.

During his service, Terry served as a Paratrooper in Northern Ireland and the Falklands. Following his service in the Falklands, Terry witnessed many "horrible sights" and suffered with nightmares and flashbacks. He left the Services in 1988.

In 1990 Terry was still on Reserve and he was called back for the 1<sup>st</sup> Gulf War. He argued not to go on medical grounds due to PTSD. Having been doing well until this point, Terry suffered from a nervous breakdown. He and his wife divorced, and he went into a "dark place". He was depressed and suicidal, sofa-surfing and sleeping in his car for about 18 months. Terry contacted the South Atlantic Medal Association. He was put in touch with Stoll, who were able to find him a flat at the Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions in Fulham, London.

At this point, Terry was still struggling, he was abusing alcohol and soft drugs, and felt unable to leave his flat for a year. Through Stoll and the NHS, he found a psychiatrist who helped him to manage the PTSD.

Terry went on to become the chairman of the Stoll Residents' Association, supporting the management team and the tenants on site. While still at Stoll, Terry started doing some anti-piracy work as part of the armed security team on container ships. He was posted to Tanzania where we met his now wife, and they had a baby in January 2020.

Since then, Terry has started up a successful catering and hospitality company.

Looking back at his time at Stoll, Terry says "the security of knowing I had somewhere to stay for life really was the building blocks for me getting my life back on track".



### 3. Identifying Veterans

#### 3.1 Who Is a Veteran?

“The Government defines a veteran as anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty’s Armed Forces either in the Regular or Reserves, or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations. Veterans have already left the UK Armed Forces.”<sup>2</sup>

#### 3.2 Why Identify Someone’s Veteran Status?

There is a range of specialist support available to veterans and their families, however most housing organisations do not ask all customers if they are a veteran or a family member of a veteran. If this question is not asked, there is a risk that veterans may be missing out on this specialist support.

We would recommend asking a mandatory question to ensure that any veterans (or family members of veterans) can be identified and linked to the help and support available.

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<sup>2</sup> Secretary of State for Defence (2018) The Strategy for our Veterans. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/755915/Strategy\\_for\\_our\\_Veterans\\_FINAL\\_08.11.18\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755915/Strategy_for_our_Veterans_FINAL_08.11.18_WEB.pdf)



### 3.3 What Questions Should We Be Asking?

At the point of first contact, housing organisations should introduce a mandatory question asked of all clients to establish if they are a veteran, by asking if they have an Armed Forces connection.

The question should establish whether the client is a:

- Former member of HM Armed Forces – Regular or Reserve.
- Spouse or partner of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces.
- Widow(er) of member of HM Armed Forces.
- Recently divorced or separated spouses or partners of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces.

It is important for staff members to explain why this question is being asked, which is to establish if they may be entitled to any additional help or support.

### 3.4 How to Identify Veterans

Most veterans will be able to bring evidence of their veteran status. This evidence may be produced in three ways:

#### 1. Certificate of Cessation for Armed Forces Accommodation

Up to six months before discharge from the Armed Forces, personnel can be issued with a *Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Accommodation*, and this is now accepted as proof of being threatened with the experience of homelessness. Sometimes, personnel leave the Armed Forces unexpectedly. A *Short Notice Discharge*, for example, as a result of discharge on disciplinary grounds or misconduct, is also valid and can give personnel as little as 28 days' notice to vacate Service-provided accommodation and return to civilian life.

#### 2. Discharge Papers

Personnel may be given several pieces of documentation during the standard discharge process that will identify them as a veteran. The process of verifying Service and directing veterans to the most appropriate sources of support can be accelerated by requesting that veterans show their *discharge papers, notice to vacate Service accommodation, or medical release forms* when making an application for help with housing. Medical discharge papers can be useful in ascertaining priority need. Remember that any household that contains a veteran or serving people, as described above, will be entitled to the special provisions in both homelessness and social housing allocations (covered later in this toolkit). That is why it is important to bear in mind that an applicant to a Local Authority may not be a serving or ex-Service person themselves, but if they are living with a family member who is, they are therefore a member of an Armed Forces household.



### **3. Veterans' ID Cards**

From 2019, some veterans may be in possession of a *Veteran's ID card*, as these have started to be given to those leaving the Armed Forces. This can also verify Service history. However, it is important to note that as the card is not compulsory, it is vital to continue to "ask the question" and verify Service using the other methods described. If the individual presenting does not have any supporting documentation, the only way to confirm if they are a veteran is through confirmation with the statutory body Veterans UK.

Veterans UK: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk)

Email: [veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk](mailto:veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk)

Freephone (UK only): 0808 1914 218

## Recommendations

- Review your key housing forms to ensure that they ask the 'veteran question.' (This may include the Housing Register form, homeless assessment form, referral form, new tenant form, or support planning documents).
- Ensure staff are able to explain why this question is being asked and understand the purpose of asking this question.

## 4. Armed Forces Covenant

### 4.1 What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

The Covenant's two principles are that:

- The Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most, such as the injured or bereaved.

For Local Authorities, the Armed Forces Covenant is a promise of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces community.

A Local Authority who has signed the Covenant promises to encourage local communities in supporting the Armed Forces community in the area, promoting understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community and make exceptions for Armed Forces families that have been moved into the area.

Housing associations can sign the Covenant too. They can make a written and publicised voluntary pledge as a business and charitable organisation that wishes to demonstrate its concrete support for the Armed Forces community.

To support the Armed Forces community under the Armed Forces Covenant means to encourage activities that help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life, and support families in accessing Local Authority services.

More information can be found on the [Armed Forces Covenant website](#)<sup>3</sup>, and a list of signatories can be found of the [Government's website](#).<sup>4</sup>

## 4.2 Housing and the Armed Forces Covenant

At a local level, the Armed Forces covenant is supported by an action plan and key pledges. The Armed Forces Covenant action plan provides an opportunity to set out what key actions are needed at a local level to improve access to housing options and support for veterans. This ensures a joined up approach to meeting the housing needs of veterans.

### Cambridge City Council: Covenant Action Plan

Cambridge City Council's Armed Forces Covenant action plan contains the following actions in relation to housing:

#### 1. Veterans' Housing Worker for Cambridgeshire

The County Council will be employing a Veterans Housing Worker.

"We will aim to have greater focus on promoting the benefits that our Lettings Policy offers, i.e., around the local connection waiver and the additional priority offered to members of the Armed Forces".

#### 2. Personalised Housing Plans

"Under the homelessness legislation, we have a duty to produce personalised housing plans (PHPs) for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. These PHPs should focus on the housing and support needs of the household.

We will review the information available to Housing Advisors about support services on offer to members/former members of the Armed Forces and update our resources accordingly.

We will then create a tailored PHP template for members of the Armed Forces which, as well as asking the question about support needs, will provide contact information for support agencies".

### Barnsley Council: Covenant Action Plan

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<sup>3</sup> Armed Forces Covenant (2022) Housing, Homelessness and the Armed Forces Covenant. Available from: <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/learning/housing-homelessness-and-the-armed-forces-covenant/#/>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Defence (2022) Search for businesses who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/search-for-businesses-who-have-signed-the-armed-forces-covenant>

Barnsley Council's Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan contains an overarching priority of 'Making a Home in Civilian Life,' which contains the following actions:

- Review the housing offer for service personnel and veterans in Barnsley.
- Continue to provide homes for veterans in Barnsley experiencing difficulties in assimilating to civilian life.
- Provide funding directly to alleviate homelessness among veterans.

Housing Associations and supported housing providers can make their organisation "Armed Forces-friendly" by committing to the Armed Forces Covenant.

### **Riverside: Corporate Covenant**

The Armed Forces covenant is also supported by the Corporate Covenant, which is a public pledge from businesses and other organisations who wish to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces Community.

Riverside were the first Civilian Registered Provider of Social housing to sign the Corporate Covenant in 2014.

## **Recommendations**

### **Local Authorities**

- Ensure staff understand what the Armed Forces Covenant is.
- Review your Armed Forces Covenant action plan to ensure that it contains key housing pledges and actions to improve access to housing and support for veterans.

### **Housing Associations and Supported Housing Providers**

- Ensure staff understand what the Armed Forces Covenant is.
- Sign up to the Corporate Covenant.

### 4.3 Armed Forces Bill

The Armed Forces Act, which gained Royal Assent in Parliament in December 2021, enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant in law for the first time to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing essential services including healthcare, education and housing.

#### **What Does the Legislation Say?**

The Armed Forces Act 2021 introduces a duty to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant as follows:

- The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces.
- The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.
- The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership of the Armed Forces.

The new duty will apply to specified persons or bodies, including councils, when exercising certain housing, education or healthcare function.

## 5. Strategic Approach

#### **What Does the Legislation Say?**

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a requirement for Local Authorities to undertake a Homelessness Review and to formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of the review.

The Homelessness Review must:

- Consider the current and future levels of homelessness and its causes.
- Identify activities that prevent homelessness and secure accommodation.
- Identify what support is available for those who are experiencing homelessness.
- Identify the resources available for the above.

The Homelessness Strategy must include actions to:

- Prevent homelessness.
- Ensure there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are or may experience homelessness.
- Ensure there is satisfactory support for people who are or may experience homelessness.

The Act states that reviews and strategies apply to all people experiencing homelessness, not just those who the Council has accepted a full duty towards under the Housing Act.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 states that “when drawing up their homelessness strategies for preventing and reducing homelessness, [Local Authorities] must consider the needs of all groups of people in their district who are homeless or likely to become homeless.”<sup>5</sup>

The Guidance states: “Housing authorities will be aware that some individuals may be at particular risk of homelessness, for example, veterans, and may require a broader package of resettlement support. When developing their homelessness strategies, housing authorities should consider carefully how to work effectively to prevent homelessness amongst these groups and ensure that appropriate support is available.”<sup>6</sup>

“Chapter 24: Former members of the Armed Forces” of the code states that ‘Housing authorities that have a significant number of service personnel stationed in their area will need to work closely with relevant partners, such as the Joint Service Housing Advice Office and MOD’s resettlement service, to ascertain likely levels of need among veterans and to design services accordingly.’<sup>7</sup>

## **5.1 How Can We Develop a Strategic Approach to Tackling Homelessness That Considers Veterans?**

It is recommended that when undertaking any future Homelessness Reviews, Local Authorities specifically consider the needs of veterans – both in terms of considering any available data to understand the nature and extent of homelessness amongst veterans and their families, but also in considering their wider housing and support needs.

When developing a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, Local Authorities should consider how to work effectively to prevent homelessness amongst veterans, together with ensuring that appropriate support is available.

It is also recommended that membership of any Local Homelessness Forums/Alliances should be widened to include local organisations and charities that work with veterans; this will ensure a joined up strategic and improved operational response to meeting

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<sup>5</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. [Section 2.16]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

<sup>6</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

<sup>7</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. [Section 24.3]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

the housing needs of this client group. It is also important to consult with these groups when developing a new Strategy.

Ideally, Housing Strategies should also consider the needs of veterans and how their housing needs can be met.

### **South Yorkshire: Service Review**

The South Yorkshire Covenant Group identified that veterans may be underreported in the monitoring data of homelessness services across the sub-region – therefore commissioned a review across Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield to ensure homelessness services are identifying and responding to the needs of veterans and their families appropriately.

A strategic review of the approach taken by each of the South Yorkshire Councils' homelessness teams in relation to identifying and responding to veterans and their families was undertaken in early 2020. This included identifying best practice, applying relevant legislation, and providing recommendations for improvement and working towards creating a consistent and excellent approach to responding to veterans experiencing homelessness and their families across South Yorkshire. As part of the project, the homelessness and allocations teams have also received specialist veteran awareness training.

The findings of the review and recommendations will inform future Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies.

### **Doncaster Council: Homelessness Strategy**

Doncaster's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 makes the following statement in relation to veterans:

“Doncaster provides support for Veterans including housing allocation, waiting list priority, tenancy support, and has additional dedicated housing stock in partnership with St Leger Homes and the Help for Homeless Veterans Charity. A Regional Veteran Awareness Package will ensure a consistent advice and housing support across Doncaster and South Yorkshire Region.”

### **Riverside: Veterans and Armed Forces Strategy**

Riverside is a Housing Association that has a standalone Veterans and Armed Forces Strategy. The Strategy aims to provide a clear picture of and vision for the services that



Riverside provide to veterans, alongside those they aim to develop, setting out a clear strategic plan between 2016 -21.

The Strategy has achieved the following:

- Improving the offer for veterans internally/externally.
- Developing a network of Veterans Champions.
- Campaigning for veterans' revenue funding .
- Raising awareness of the SPACES service.
- Building an evidence-base through Riverside services and research project.

The Strategy is available [here](#).<sup>8</sup>

## Recommendations

- Homelessness Reviews and Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies should specifically consider the needs of veterans to understand the nature and extent of homelessness amongst Veterans and their families and their wider housing and support needs.
- Review membership of local Homelessness Forums/Alliances to include local veterans charities and organisations.
- Consult with the Armed Forces Covenant when undertaking Homelessness Reviews and developing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies.
- Ensure that Housing Strategies consider the housing needs of veterans where there is a local identified need.

## 6. Bespoke Advice and Information

### 6.1 Advice and Information

The Joint Service Housing Advice Office is a Ministry of Defence team providing specialist advice to Service personnel and their families on their civilian housing options. They also give advice on organisations that could help ex-Service personnel accessing housing. Topics include property purchase, private rented options and social housing

### What Does the Legislation Say?

The Homelessness Code of Guidance states that "Housing Authorities have a duty (Section 179) to provide advisory services free of charge to people in their district. The

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<sup>8</sup> Available from: <https://www.riverside.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/5-Veterans-Strategy-FINAL.pdf>

service must be designed to meet the needs of certain groups, which include former members of the regular Armed Forces.”<sup>9</sup>

The Housing Act 1996 states that housing authorities must design advice and information services to meet the needs of people within their district including, in particular, the needs of the following groups...(c) former members of the regular Armed Forces.”<sup>10</sup>

## 6.2 What Advice and Information Should You Be Providing?

Providing a range of advice and useful information can ensure that serving members, veterans and their family members are able to access all of the information that they need in relation to their housing options. This can take the form of bespoke advice leaflets or factsheets, or comprehensive information available on the Council’s website.

### **Barnsley Council: Website**

Barnsley Council has a clear and prominent link from its Housing Options web pages to information for veterans. The veterans web page provides comprehensive information under a range of themes including ‘Making a Home in Civilian Society’, with further information about finding a home.

Advice should also include signposting to national specialist charities for additional support. There are a wide range of Armed Forces charities operating through the UK. [The Veterans’ Gateway](#)<sup>11</sup> was established to be a first point of contact for veterans seeking support. The Gateway provides help from specialist housing advisers and can be accessed 24 hours a day seven days a week.

It is also important to make links with any local Armed Forces charities operating in your area so that you are familiar with what services they can provide and to also establish positive working relationships with clear referrals pathways and contacts.

### **Recommendations**

→ Ensure bespoke and detailed information is available for Service members and veterans on the range of available housing options and support organisations on Local Authority websites.

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<sup>9</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. [Section 24.6]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

<sup>10</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. [Section 3.5, s.179b (2)]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

<sup>11</sup> Available from: <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk>

- Ensure that the website contains a link to the Veterans' Gateway.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Veterans' Gateway.
- Work closely with local Armed Forces charities to establish clear referral pathways.

## 7. Preventing Homelessness Amongst Veterans

### What Does the Legislation Say?

The legislation places a duty on housing authorities to work with people who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days to help prevent them from experiencing homelessness.<sup>12</sup>

It also requires housing authorities to help people who are experiencing homelessness to secure accommodation.<sup>13</sup>

### Preventing Homelessness

Early intervention is crucial when it comes to preventing homelessness. Even though the statutory prevention duty does not arise until 56 days prior to someone experiencing homelessness, authorities should make arrangements to ensure that prevention activity takes place at as early a stage as possible.

### Certificate of Cessation

The Ministry of Defence issues a Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Accommodation 6 months before discharge. Local Authorities should consider this as proof of a threat of homelessness and should not insist upon a court order for possession.

Authorities should take full advantage of the six-month period of notice of discharge to ensure that Service personnel receive detailed and timely advice on the housing options available to them when they leave the Armed Forces, and opportunities for prevention work can be maximised.

The advice and prevention work should involve working closely with Armed Forces organisations and charities to ensure that all available options can be explored and that they can be linked into wider support.

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<sup>12</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. [Section 12.1, s.195]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

<sup>13</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. [Section 13.1, s.189b]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

Prevention of homelessness is essential and Local Authorities should not delay assisting Service personnel due to the fact that they receive a longer notice period than other customers might receive.

### **Duty to Refer**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a duty on certain public authorities to refer customers who may be experiencing homelessness or threatened with homelessness to a housing authority. The service user must give consent and can choose which authority to be referred to.

The Secretary of State for Defence is subject to the duty to refer in relation to members of the regular Forces (i.e., the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular Army, and the Royal Air Force). Service personnel facing homelessness within 56 days must therefore be referred to a local housing authority, with the individual's consent.

It is important for Local Authorities to develop effective liaison and close working relationships with the Ministry of Defence to ensure that these referrals are being received.

### **Disabled Facilities Grant**

Mandatory disabled facilities grants (DFGs) are available from Local Authorities in England and Wales and the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland, subject to a means test, for essential adaptations to give disabled people better freedom of movement into and around their homes, and to give access to essential facilities within the home.

The means test for DFGs has been amended so that Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) and War Pension Scheme (WPS) payments for the most seriously disabled Service personnel are disregarded for the purposes of assessing eligibility.

### **Ministry of Defence Deposit Scheme**

The MOD Tenancy Deposit Scheme allows defence personnel to apply for an advance of salary loan to help meet the cost of a deposit for a rental property.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/help-to-secure-a-rental-home-the-mod-tenancy-deposit-loan-scheme>

### **Bespoke Housing Options**

Some Local Authorities have developed bespoke housing options specifically to meet the needs of veterans and their families. Adopting this approach could include having a specialist Armed Forces Housing Officer.

## **Newcastle City Council: Rent Deposit and Tenancy Support**

Newcastle City Council were awarded a grant through the North of Tyne Combined Authority following central Government funding as part of the Supporting Homeless Veterans Fund. With an already well-established Private Rented Team offering support to access and sustain tenancies in the private rented sector, the grant funding allowed the team to provide targeted support to veterans to access and sustain a tenancy through help with a deposit and home set-up costs - something that hadn't been possible previously. Veterans are referred through the Council's existing Homelessness Services and Armed Forces Outreach Service. Building on existing relationships with teams who work directly with veterans and their families, a lead officer for the private rented team acts as the main point of contact and can seek to understand the nature of the client group and guide the service to best meet the needs of the group.

**Rent Deposit Scheme:** The scheme offers a virtual deposit in place of a cash bond to overcome the initial financial burden, but also provides support in sourcing well managed and affordable homes. Tenants are provided with a tenancy set-up service that include help with benefits, access to furniture, advice on tenant's rights, and setting up utilities. In addition, tenants will receive ongoing support for the duration in order to sustain the tenancy.

**Tenancy Support Fund:** A tenancy support fund covers any costs that might be a barrier to a veterans (or the families of veterans) securing appropriate accommodation. This fund has a wide scope in recognition of the differing needs of each client but can include upfront payments of rent in advance, short term rent top-ups, Guarantor insurance, etc.

**Tenancy Sustainment Support:** The team works with landlords and tenants to sustain existing tenancies. It aims to ensure both parties understand their rights and responsibilities and can assist tenants in meeting their tenancy requirements and communicate and negotiate with their landlord.

### **Rotherham Council: Homeless Veteran Grants Project**

Rotherham Council's housing team have a dedicated grant which is used to provide immediate support to veterans to provide appropriate accommodation and support if this is required. This is in the form of a personalisation fund which may include bond and rent in advance to secure private rented accommodation, rent in advance for a housing association tenancy, and any associated set-up costs for a new home, e.g., carpets, furniture, bedding, and other household costs. In addition, bus passes or other financial support to find work or training may be considered, such as clothing.

### **Armed Forces Outreach Service**

The Armed Forces Outreach Service is a regional partnership between the Local Authorities and housing associations in the North East of England providing a dedicated service to the Armed Forces Community.

Outreach team members work in either local authority or housing association offices. They are trained to help people from the Armed Forces to find a home and settle into the community. They can also give general housing advice and help with any other housing matters or problems such as moving home, homelessness and rent arrears.

### **Recommendations**

- Adopt an approach to early intervention and prevention by working with veterans from the point at which the 'Certificate of Cessation' is issued to ensure opportunities for homeless prevention are maximised. Ensure that procedures reflect this.
- Establish a good working relationship with the Ministry of Defence to ensure that duty to refer is being made.
- Consider the development of bespoke housing options where a need is identified.

## **8. Homelessness**

While the focus of any Housing Options service should be on preventing homelessness, there will be times when either prevention action has not worked or a veteran or family member contacts the service once they are already experiencing homelessness.

### **8.1 Personal Housing Plans**

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, if an applicant is experiencing homelessness or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, an assessment of their support needs must be conducted and a Personalised Housing Plan must be written to

set out the steps the individual and the housing authority must take for the individual to remain in or find suitable accommodation.

The development of a bespoke personal housing plan specifically for veterans can ensure that veterans are provided with all of the key information that they need including details of local and national Armed Forces charities.

Many national and local veteran charities will be willing to work in partnership with Local Authorities to assist and support customers to deliver the personal housing plan actions.

### **Cambridge City Council: Personal Housing Plan**

Cambridge City Council has developed a suite of bespoke personal housing plans, which include a specialist veteran personal housing plan. The plan contains details of a wide range of specialist national and local organisations which support veterans.

## **8.2 When a Veteran is Experiencing Homelessness**

In a situation where it has not been possible to prevent homelessness, the Local Housing Authority must make further enquiries to understand if the client may be in priority need in order to understand if there is a duty to provide temporary accommodation. They may also have to make further enquiries to determine if the individual is intentionally experiencing homelessness and has a local connection to the area.

### **What Does the Legislation Say?**

**Priority Need:** Someone is in priority need if they are pregnant, have dependent children, are at risk of domestic abuse, or who are vulnerable in some other way.

A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of His Majesty's regular Armed Forces (a veteran) has a priority need for accommodation.

In considering whether veterans are vulnerable as a result of their time spent in the Forces a housing authority may wish to take into account the following:

- The length of time the applicant spent in the Armed Forces (although authorities should not assume that vulnerability could not occur as a result of a short period of Service).
- The type of Service the applicant was engaged in (those in active Service may find it more difficult to cope with civilian life).
- Whether the applicant spent any time in a military hospital (this could be an indicator of a serious health problem or of post-traumatic stress).



- Whether HM Forces' medical and welfare advisers have judged an individual to be particularly vulnerable in their view and have issued a Medical History Release Form giving a summary of the circumstances causing that vulnerability.
- The length of time since the applicant left the Armed Forces, and whether they have been able to obtain and/or maintain accommodation during that time.
- Whether the applicant has any existing support networks, particularly by way of family or friends.

**Intentionally Experiencing Homelessness:** A person may be considered to be intentionally experiencing homelessness if they have deliberately done something or failed to do something that has led to them losing their accommodation.

Where Service personnel are required to vacate Service quarters as a result of taking up an option to give notice to leave the Service, and in doing so are acting in compliance with their contractual engagement, they should not be considered to have become homeless intentionally.

**Local Connection:** Section 315 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 amended section 199 of the 1996 Act to enable members of the Armed Forces to establish a local connection through residence or employment in the same way as a civilian.

### 8.3 What Can We Do to Improve Our Approach?

Developing a one-page summary of all the key areas that housing options staff should consider when working with a veteran who is experiencing homelessness would ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge.

The homelessness assessment form could be supported by a list of supplementary questions with key areas to consider when assessing vulnerability in relation to having served in the Armed Forces and establishing priority need.

#### Recommendations

- Develop a one-page summary covering homelessness and veterans for use by staff.
- Develop a list of supplementary questions to complement the homelessness assessment form for assessing priority need due to having served in the Armed Forces.

## 9. Social Housing

### 9.1 Allocations Policies

Members of the Armed Forces community who experience difficulties securing suitable accommodation may wish to apply for social housing. However, the experience of

many members of the Armed Forces community who apply for social housing is not always a smooth one.

Under legislation, Local Authorities are required to have an allocation scheme determining priorities for the allocation of social housing. The scheme must comply with the relevant legislation and code of guidance.

## 9.2 What the Law Says

Authorities are strongly encouraged to take into account the needs of current and former members of the Armed Forces when determining their allocations policies “and to give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or former Service personnel who may have been disadvantaged by the requirements of military service and in particular the need to move from base to base.”<sup>14</sup>

**Additional Preference:** The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulation 2012 requires Local Authorities to give additional preference (high priority) to specified members of the Armed Forces community who have reasonable preference and urgent housing needs.

### What Does the Legislation Say?

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 states:

The allocation scheme must be framed so as to give additional preference to a person with urgent housing needs who falls within one or more of paragraphs (a) to (e), and who:

- i. Is serving in the regular Forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person’s service,
- ii. Formerly served in the regular Forces,
- iii. Has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular Forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- iv. Is serving or has served in the reserve Forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person’s service.

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities. [4.24]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-authorities>

**Local Connection:** Changes to allocations legislation in 2012 allowed service personnel to establish a local connection to the area that they are serving in, or have served, on the same basis as civilians living in the area.

A bereaved spouse or civil partner who has lost their partner as a result of their service can also establish a local connection in the same way.

### **What Does the Legislation Say?**

The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) 2012 states the following:

“Criterion that may not be used in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons:

1. In deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons under section 160ZA(7) of the 1996 Act, a local housing authority in England may not use the criterion set out in paragraph (2).
2. The criterion is that a relevant person must have a local connection to the district of a local housing authority.
3. A relevant person is a person who:
  - a. Is serving in the regular Forces or who has served in the regular Forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of housing under Part 6 of the 1996 Act.
  - b. Has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s spouse or civil partner where—
    - i. The spouse or civil partner has served in the regular Forces; and
    - ii. Their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
  - c. Is serving or has served in the reserve Forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service”.

**Further Updates:** In July 2020, the Government guidance on social housing allocations was updated to improve access to social housing for veterans and Armed Forces personnel.

Local Authorities must now ensure that members of the Armed Forces and ex-Service personnel suffering with mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are given priority for housing.

The new statutory guidance also “strongly encourages” Councils to exempt former spouses or civil partners of Service personnel needing to move out of Ministry of

Defence accommodation from any local connection requirements to qualify for a social home.

Councils have also been encouraged to train housing options staff to understand the “specific needs and circumstances” of the Armed Forces community.

### 9.3 What Can We Do?

For Local Authorities the first thing you should do is to ensure that your Allocations Policy is legally compliant in relation to veterans, particularly in relation to additional preference and local connection.

For Service personnel who may have moved around the country multiple times as a result of their service they can be unsure at the point at which they are discharged where may be the most suitable place for them to settle into civilian life.

In situations where a veteran is discharged unexpectedly early due to injury or other circumstances or in the cases of a bereaved family member, they may not be in a position to make decisions about their long-term housing aspirations. A more flexible approach to the length of time that local connection exemptions apply would provide a better offer to veterans and their families.

Examples of ways in which authorities and their partners can ensure that Service personnel and their families are given appropriate priority include:

- Using the flexibility within the allocation legislation to set local priorities alongside the statutory reasonable preference categories so as to give preference, for example, to those who have recently left or are close to leaving the Armed Forces.
- Using the power to determine priorities between applicants in the reasonable preference categories, so that applicants in housing need who have served in the Armed Forces are given greater priority for social housing over those who have not.
- If taking into account an applicant’s financial resources in determining priorities between households with a similar level of need, disregarding any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.
- In line with the new statutory guidance, extend the exemption from local connection to divorced and separated spouses/civil partners and partners of Armed Forces personnel.
- Give consideration to expanding the five-year local connection exemption or adopting a more flexible approach in recognition of the fact that people upon leaving the Forces may live in a number of areas before being able to make a decision about where they wish to settle in the longer term.

Sheffield's housing allocations policy gives additional priority to veterans and Service personnel by backdating the registration date to the date that the applicant or their spouse/civil partner entered the Forces.

### **Doncaster Metropolitan Council: Length of Service**

Doncaster's Allocation Policy places veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the last 5 years in the highest band and backdates the registration date in line with the number of years' service – for example a veteran with 10 years' service would receive the equivalent priority of being on the Housing Register for 10 years.

### **Cheshire West and Chester Council: Additional Preference**

Cheshire West and Chester's allocation policy places all members of the Armed Forces who are in housing need into Band B of their policy.

For those in housing need who have a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service will be placed in Band A, which is the highest priority.

### **Hammersmith and Fulham: Community Contribution**

The Council's Allocation policy has a community contribution element, whereby those who make a community contribution should have greater priority for accommodation allocated by the Council. For those who qualify for a community contribution and have reasonable preference they will be placed in Band 2.

Applicants who have served in the British Armed Forces and lived in Hammersmith & Fulham for at least 6 months immediately prior to enlisting, will qualify for a community contribution award automatically, with the exception of those who have been dishonourably discharged. This includes people who have served in the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and British Army.

### **Croydon Council: Flexible Approach**

Croydon Council's Housing Allocations policy goes above statutory guidance by a willingness to consider applications from veterans 5 years after discharge where there are justifiable reasons, disregarding lump sums that have been received as compensation for an injury or disability sustained while on service from any affordability assessments, for eligibility to join the Housing Register and having a nominated officer to deal with veterans and Service personnel enquiries.

## 9.4 Accessing Social Housing

Local Authorities and housing associations can consider setting aside a proportion of properties for former members of the Armed Forces under a local lettings policy.

**Ministry of Defence Referral Scheme:** The MOD Referral Scheme is coordinated by the Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) to assist some Service leavers to get accommodation via housing associations.

Some housing associations ask JSHAO to nominate personnel as tenants for vacant properties. Being on the MOD Referral Scheme provides an additional route to secure housing.

The MOD have recognised that some Service leavers have difficulty in accessing social and affordable housing. Through this scheme, the donating housing associations are able to help people who otherwise may have problems being prioritised high enough to have a realistic chance of being housed by Local Authorities:

- Those who have difficulty proving a local connection.
- Couples with no children.
- Single personnel.

Adapted and sheltered (both supported and unsupported) accommodation is also available through the scheme.

Applicants are reminded that the JSHAO itself does not possess any housing stock and the scheme is not a guarantee of securing housing association property. Personnel are advised to apply directly to the Local Authority and housing associations alongside applying to this scheme.

**Veterans Nomination Scheme:** Another way in which social housing providers can increase access to social housing for veterans and their families is to consider partnering with the Veterans' Nomination Scheme.

The Veterans' Nomination Scheme (VNS) is a project run by Stoll and originally funded by The Royal British Legion, to find stable and affordable homes for veterans. Stoll works collaboratively with over 90 housing associations and Local Authorities in England and Wales to match them with ex-Service personnel in need of a home. The scheme works well for single veterans or couples without children and with low support needs who are struggling to find an affordable home. Once an applicant has been referred to the VNS, Stoll will match them up with a nearby housing provider and secure accommodation at affordable rates of rent.

### Riverside Housing Association

Riverside have committed to allocating 4% of their social housing stock to veterans and their families, in line with the fact that 4% of the UK population have served in the regular Armed Forces.

### **Haig Housing Trust**

Haig Housing is a housing provider for ex-Service personnel in the UK. The charity now owns over 1,500 properties across 50 locations.

The Trust assists eligible veterans in housing need, whether they are transitioning into civilian life or are simply in need of a helping hand.

Located across the UK, properties are a mix of family-sized and smaller houses, flats and maisonettes on small well-managed estates.

Properties are available to qualifying beneficiaries at an affordable, charitable rent. Haig Housing also offers advice, guidance and signposting to other veterans charities and other organisations to assist those in housing need.

### **Wandsworth Council**

Wandsworth Council has a quota of social housing properties that are specifically allocated to members of the Armed Forces community. Wandsworth is working with Stoll who are able to nominate individuals for some of these properties.

## **9.5 Low Cost Home Ownership**

Members of the Armed Forces have priority for government-funded shared ownership schemes. Service personnel retain their priority status for up to 24 months after service. If they die while in service, their priority can be transferred to their bereaved spouse or civil partner.

There are a variety of low-cost home ownership schemes that Service and ex-Service personnel can apply for. The details of these schemes can be found on the Gov.UK website. The main schemes are:

- **Help to Buy - Equity Loan Scheme 2021-23:** For serving personnel (generally limited to those who have served a pre-requisite length of service; have more than six months left to serve at the time of applying and who meet the stipulated medical categories), there is the Forces Help to Buy scheme. This is a £200 million scheme which allows "Service personnel to borrow up to 50% of their salary, interest free, [capped at £25,000] to buy their first home or move to another property on assignment or as their family needs change." Repayments are made



directly from the buyer's salary over a ten-year period. The pilot scheme has been extended to 31 December 2022.

- **Shared Ownership:** As detailed above, military personnel have priority over other groups. Priority status can also be transferred to bereaved spouses and civil partners of Service personnel. Under shared ownership, the buyer purchases a share of their home (traditionally between 25% and 75% but the Government is reducing the minimum share to 10%), either with savings or a shared ownership mortgage, and pays rent on the remainder. They can progressively buy larger shares of the property at market value until they own 100% of the property. There are restrictions on eligibility based on income.
- **First Homes:** Under this scheme, the Government's aim is that homes will be developed for first-time buyers with a 30% discount against market value. In 2021, it was announced that in recognition of the unique nature of service to the Armed Forces, serving members, veterans within 5 years of leaving the Services, divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of serving members, or the spouse or civil partner of a deceased member of the Armed Forces (if their death was wholly or partly caused by their service) shall not have to meet any local connection criteria in order to qualify for a First Home. This will give them the opportunity to settle in the community of their choosing.

## **Haig Housing: Shared Leasehold Scheme**

### **Housing for Wounded, Injured, or Sick Service Personnel or Veterans**

The Shared Leasehold scheme enables wounded, injured, or sick Service personnel (currently being or recently medically discharged from the Forces or Veterans) to jointly purchase, with Haig Housing Trust (HHT), a property for them and their family. Where the beneficiary has or will receive compensation or insurance, it enables the purchase of a shared equity option, possibly leading to full ownership by beneficiary stair-casing options.

The scheme aims to enable:

- Purchase of a home in a suitable location close to family, friends and support networks.
- Purchase of a bungalow or a larger property if it is necessary to accommodate a through-floor lift.
- Acquire a property whilst still serving but before final AFCS/insurance payments have been received to allow any aids and adaptations to be completed by the MOD before discharge, and offsetting the rent charged again.

## **9.6 Development of Social Housing**

Both Local Authorities and housing associations may wish to develop social housing specifically for veterans in response to locally identified need. There are a wide range of good practice examples nationally to draw upon.

### **Stonewater: Self-Build Veterans Housing Scheme**

Stonewater worked in partnership with Herefordshire Council, local contractor J Harper & Son Ltd, and veterans' charity Alabaré to develop an 18-home veteran self-build scheme.

Six previously homeless veterans took part in the project working alongside the development's contractor to gain valuable, transferable skills to improve their employment opportunities. At the end of the project each veteran involved was provided with a secure new affordable home for themselves and their families to rent.

### **Riverside Housing Association: General Needs Accommodation**

Riverside's development strategy contains a commitment to develop general needs accommodation specifically for veterans. There are plans to develop 40 units of accommodation, which will consist of a mix of family and single person accommodation to meet local identified needs.

### **Riverside Scotland: New Developments**

Riverside Scotland has committed that more than 10% of new social housing developments will be set aside for military veterans to help them avoid experiencing homelessness.

The Tarryholme development in Irvine will develop 77 new homes, of which 10 will be allocated to veteran households who are in housing need through a partnership agreement between Riverside Scotland and V1P Ayrshire.

These homes will specifically address the housing needs of households who are at risk of experiencing homelessness upon discharge from the Forces, or who require dedicated support to assist with resettlement.

All properties on the development will be built to the Housing for Varying Needs Standard to ensure they remain flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of households over time.

### **Wrexham Veteran's Self-Build Project**

Ty Ryan in Wrexham is a self-build housing development for veterans, giving ex-Service personnel the opportunity to gain valuable trade skills and qualifications, alongside providing them with a home.

Ty Ryan is made up of 16 apartments, and was developed in partnership with Wrexham Council, who supplied the land, First Choice Housing Association, who managed the construction of the scheme, and the Community Self-Build Agency who mentored the self-builders during the construction phase.

It is also important for your development plans to take the specific needs of veterans into account, for example buildings and spaces that do not reinforce trauma and developing accessible properties.

### **9.7 New Tenants**

When signing up a new tenant, it is equally important to ask the 'veteran question'. It is possible that this question may not have been asked earlier on in the registration process.

By identifying if your new tenant is a veteran or a family member, you can talk to them about their wider support needs and then link them to the wide range of advice and assistance that may be available, this could include specialist support, resettlement support and practical assistance such as financial help with furniture, fittings, and white goods.

It is also recommended that you review your pre-tenancy work to see how this could better meet the needs of veterans.

### **Recommendations**

- Review your allocations policy to ensure that it is legally compliant and consider the adoption of best practice into your revised policy.
- Don't take into account lump sum compensation linked to service when assessing eligibility to join the Housing Register.
- Extend local connection exemptions to divorced and separated spouses/civil partners.
- Adopt a flexible approach to the five-year local connection exemption.
- Consult with veterans' charities on any revised allocations policy.
- Consider setting aside a proportion of properties for former members of the Armed Forces under a local lettings policy.
- Consider working with Stoll through the VNS or set aside housing stock specifically for ex-Service personnel or their families.
- Consider accepting referrals through the MOD Referrals Scheme.
- Consider developing social housing specifically for veterans in response to locally identified need.
- Consider how any new housing developments can take into account the needs of veterans by being accessible and not reinforcing trauma.
- Identify if your new tenant is a veteran or a family member, by asking the veteran question, and then linking them in with relevant support.

## **10. Supported Housing**

### **10.1 What is Supported Housing?**

In supported housing, accommodation is provided alongside support, supervision or care to help people live as independently as possible in the community.

The supported housing sector is diverse, comprising of housing associations and local council housing, as well as charities (that are not also housing associations) and voluntary organisations. Housing providers and schemes can vary significantly in size and scale – from large organisations with tens of thousands of residents across the country, to smaller local providers who may own one property.

### **10.2 Specialist Veteran Supported Housing**

There are a number of specialist supported housing projects specifically for people who have served in the Armed Forces.

The Cobseo Housing Cluster is made up of a wide range of charitable and social housing organisations that provide veteran-specific accommodation. This ranges from specialist hostel and supported housing projects for those with a specific need to family accommodation in assured and assured shorthold tenancies.

It is possible [to search for veteran-specific accommodation](#)<sup>15</sup> provided by Cobseo Housing Cluster members and Veterans' Gateway supporters. This ranges from specialist hostel and supported housing projects to family accommodation.

### **Riverside: Supported Housing**

Riverside deliver the following short-term accommodation-based support services for veterans:

- **The Beacon, Catterick Garrison:** 31 self-contained flats with support including an IT-suite, gym, artisan bakery, health & wellbeing centre, training area and garden with allotment.
- **Mike Jackson House, Aldershot Garrison:** 25 self-contained flats with support.
- **Hardwick House, Middlesbrough:** 20 self-contained flats with support.

Riverside have a unique understanding of veterans' needs as their services have been developed by staff, who themselves have served in the Armed Forces, ensuring a targeted approach which is very successful at working with ex-Service personnel. Riverside believe in 'experts by experience' being pivotal to the design of effective services.

### **Agamemnon: Supported Housing**

Agamemnon are a Housing Association who provide affordable and sensitively managed sheltered housing for people over 60 years of age, giving priority to those who have serviced in the Armed Forces. All of the self-contained flats are designed specifically for the over 60s with a scheme manager on site, and access to communal facilities. The projects place a great focus on the provision of social activities in order to combat loneliness, creating a feeling of community.

### **My Space Housing Solutions**

My Space provide 55 units of self-contained accommodation to veterans. The My Space supported living schemes give residents the opportunity to recover from any

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<sup>15</sup> Veterans' Gateway (2022) Finding a Home. Available from: [https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/finding\\_a\\_home](https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/finding_a_home)

mental health or substance misuse issues. The organisation provides specialised housing related support and a safe place to transition from military to civilian life.

### **Alabaré**

Alabaré's Homes for Veterans provide supported accommodation to British Armed Forces Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They provide dedicated support to Veterans across England and Wales - specifically; Wiltshire, Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Devon, Dorset as well as North and South Wales

### **Veterans Launchpad**

Launchpad exists to provide accommodation and other support, with the expertise of specialist providers to support veterans to stabilise their lives and make a successful transition from military to civilian life.

## **10.3 Asking the Veteran Question**

While there is specialist veteran supported accommodation provision across the Country, many veterans will live in general supported housing provision. Therefore, it is really important that supported accommodation providers know how to identify a veteran and then link individuals into the wider specialist support that is available.

It is important that all supported housing providers ask new residents the 'veteran question.' It is essential to understand if a new resident is a veteran so that any needs that relate to their Service can be understood and addressed during support planning.

It is equally important to explain why you are asking this question, which is to be able to link into the wider support that is available.

We would recommend ensuring that forms ask the 'veteran question', and that staff are trained to be able to ask the question and know why they are asking the question.

Where supported housing providers receive referrals from Local Authorities or other organisations we would recommend asking that referring agencies include whether the customer is a veteran on the referral form.

Where you hold a waiting list for vacancies, you may wish to consider giving priority for vacancies to veterans.

## 10.4 Support Planning

Where a new resident has been identified as a veteran, any support needs in relation to their service experience should be built into the support planning sessions. This may include linking into wider national and local veterans' organisations in order to access specialist support.

Triangle Consultancy have developed the [Independence Star](#) as a tool for people receiving support from Armed Forces organisations to improve their quality of life.

The Independence Star was developed in collaboration with the Officers' Association, and with further input from Help for Heroes.

The Independence Star<sup>16</sup> covers six key outcome areas:

- Finances
- Housing
- Health
- Activities
- Social life
- Well-being

## 10.5 Move-On

When planning for move-on from supported housing, support staff should be aware of all of the specialist help and provision detailed within this toolkit to ensure that veterans are able to maximise the chances of successful move-on. This will include ensuring that they are receiving the correct priority on social housing waiting lists, considering possible options through the Veteran's Nomination Scheme and Ministry of Defence Referral Scheme, and accessing any specialist move-on support and grants.

### Recommendations

- Ensure that new residents are asked the 'veteran question' and then linking them into the relevant support as needed.
- Consider prioritising vacancies for veterans.
- Ensure that support planning takes into account any support needs that have arisen due to a client's service history, and links them into specialist support.
- Ensure staff are aware of all of the specialist help and provision to support successful move-on.

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<sup>16</sup> Available from: <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/see-the-stars/independence-star/>

## 11. Staff Knowledge and Awareness

Staff training and knowledge is fundamental to providing an improved service to veterans and their families. Some organisations will regularly work with veterans and will have developed in-house expertise, whereas for others contact with veterans may be less frequent. It is really important that for staff who may have less frequent contact with veterans they have had the opportunity to attend training, but it is even more critical that they have access to resources to ensure they can access up-to-date information in order to give the best possible advice.

We recommend ensuring that existing staff are provided with up-to-date training and information, and that this also forms part of the induction process for new staff.

Having an in-house Veterans' Champion can provide expertise within an organisation upon which other team members can draw.

It is important to ensure that policies and procedures are up-to-date and consider the needs of veterans.

It is also essential to develop links with national, and even more importantly local charities, in order to develop a greater understanding of each other's roles and how to access services.

### **Riverside: Veterans' Champions**

Riverside have a network of Veterans' Champions, in each of their geographical areas across England and Scotland. The champions develop expertise and raise awareness, they are a single point of contact to provide support and guidance to their colleagues. They also research and engage with local veterans' networks and forums.

### **South Yorkshire: Development of a South Yorkshire E-Learning Module**

An e-learning package, specifically about ex-Services personnel experiencing homelessness and their families has been developed and rolled out across all South Yorkshire Councils for homelessness officers, estate management and housing officers on the 'front line'. It has also been introduced to other key organisations and charities that deal with veterans and other partners within Community Covenant Groups.

### **Riverside: Veterans' Hub**

Riverside's intranet contains a veterans' hub for colleagues to access information and advice on veterans, alongside details of their internal Veterans' Champions who are



available to provide advice. They are also in the process of uploading an online training programme with further resources and information.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that all staff know how to ask the 'veteran question' and why they are asking it.
- Ensure staff have a clear understanding of what steps must be taken with a veteran as soon as they are identified.
- Ensure staff have up to date knowledge on what the legislation says in relation to veterans and housing that is relevant to their job.
- Ensure that all frontline staff have access to training on veterans and housing, and that this is regularly refreshed
- Make sure staff are aware of national and local veterans' organisations
- Make contact with local veterans' organisations and establish good working relationships and an understanding of each other's roles.
- Ensure staff have access to resources and information.
- Update policies and procedures so that staff have clear guidance.
- Appoint a Veteran Champion within your organisation

## **12. What Can Our Organisation Do as an Employer?**

Alongside thinking about how you can improve the service that you offer to your customers who are veterans, it is equally important to think about your role as an employer and how you can support veterans that you employ, and how you can make your organisation attractive to veterans and Service personnel.

This could include actively recruiting veteran and serving personnel as both paid members of staff and as volunteers, recognising the skills they can bring to the organisation, and reviewing HR policies in relation to reservist employees.

Launched in 2014 the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which is a key part of the Armed Forces Covenant encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same.

### **Riverside**

Riverside actively recruit veteran and serving personnel onto their staff teams, recognising the lived experience and skills they bring – with a significant number of their veteran services being run by veterans.

Riverside provide up to two weeks paid leave for volunteer reservist employees to attend reservist training.

Where Reservists are mobilised, Riverside will provide support to the employee and will ensure that they are able to return to the same type of job they were doing prior to being mobilised on the same terms and conditions.

Riverside also delivered an open day to encourage and welcome defence personnel to consider Riverside as a veteran-friendly organisation that recognises the value to their skills, work ethic, and life experience.

### **Black Country Housing Group**

Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) have received a gold award for the support they provide to veterans within their workforce from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

BCHG were recognised for the following initiatives:

- Assisting veterans into work
- Proactively promoting, encourage and helping other organisations to sign the Armed Forces Covenant
- Giving colleagues opportunities for special leave
- Recruiting members of the Armed Forces Community
- Sponsoring Armed Forces Day in Dudley

### **Recommendations**

- Review your employee policies to ensure that you consider the needs of veterans and reservists.
- Review your own internal recruitment policies to consider how you can attract veterans.

## **13. Support for Veterans**

This section of the toolkit provides details of a range of national organisations that support veterans, that can provide a useful resource for staff members.

You will want to supplement this list with details of local organisations working within your area.

### **Army Families Federation (AFF)**

Army Families Federation is the voice of the Army family. It empowers, acts as an advocate and an expert witness to promote a quality of life which reflects the Armed Forces Covenant.

[www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

### **Cobseo**

The Housing Cluster of the Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo) includes the main providers of general needs and supported housing for the ex-Service community in its Directory of Dedicated Services for Veterans.

[www.Cobseo.org.uk](http://www.Cobseo.org.uk)

### **First Light Trust**

First Light Trust provide support to all those who have served in the Emergency Services and Armed Forces and their families.

[www.firstlighttrust.co.uk](http://www.firstlighttrust.co.uk)

### **Forces Connect**

'Forces Connect' is a free mobile app which signposts veterans to organisations offering support.

### **No Homeless Veterans**

The No Homeless Veterans campaign provides a directory of every single veteran-specific accommodation unit and how to access it in the country:

<https://s22009.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Directory-of-Dedicated-Services-for-Veterans-2020.pdf>

### **Shelter**

Shelter provide advice on a wide range of housing issues, including homelessness.

Helpline 0808 800 4444

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice)

### **SPACES**

The Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services (SPACES) is a national advice and case-management service. SPACES provides direct accommodation placements.

The services target the most vulnerable Service leavers – regardless of rank, length-of-service, or discharge reason. SPACES includes support for single Service leavers and veterans, at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. Skilled, experienced staff provide tailored support including:

- Finding and securing appropriate accommodation for Service leavers upon discharge, to reduce the risk of homelessness/rough sleeping.
- Finding and securing veteran's accommodation.
- Providing support prior to discharge from the Armed Forces (up to 12-months).

[www.riverside.org.uk](http://www.riverside.org.uk)

### **SSAFA**

SSAFA is an Armed Forces charity providing lifelong support to anyone who is currently serving, or has ever serviced in the Royal Navy, British Army or RAF and their families.

[www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)

### **Statutory Guidance**

This brings together all of the statutory guidance in relation to veterans and housing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-members-of-the-armed-forces/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-members-of-the-armed-forces>

### **The Naval Families Federation (NFF)**

The Naval Families Federation offers Royal Naval and Royal Marine's families an independent voice and representation. They also provide support and guidance on the issues affecting daily life that occur due to being part of a Naval Service family.

[www.nff.org.uk](http://www.nff.org.uk)

### **The RAF Benevolent Fund**

The RAF Benevolent Fund provides assistance to the RAF family when they are in need and supports the morale and wellbeing of the servicing RAF.

[www.rafbf.org](http://www.rafbf.org)

### **The RAF Families Federation**

The RAF Families Federation provides all RAF personnel and their families- regular and reserve, single or married – with timely and professional support, assistance and an independent voice regarding issues or concerns that they may have.

[www.raf-ff.org.uk](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk)

### **The Ripple Pond**

The Ripple Pond provides peer support community officers to the adult family members of physically or psychologically injured British Forces personnel and veterans.

[www.theripplepond.org](http://www.theripplepond.org)

### **The Royal British Legion**

Helping serving members of the Armed Forces, ex-Service personnel and their families and dependents.

National Helpline: 0808 802 8080

[www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

### **The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC)**

The RNRMC is the principal charity of the Royal Navy. They exist to support sailors, marines, and their families for life

[www.rnrmc.org.uk](http://www.rnrmc.org.uk)

### **Veterans Aid**

For veterans facing street homelessness the national service is provided by Veterans Aid.

[www.veterans-aid.net](http://www.veterans-aid.net)

Freephone: 0800 012 6867

[info@veterans-aid.net](mailto:info@veterans-aid.net)

### **Veterans' Gateway**

Veterans' Gateway is a first point of contact for veterans seeking support and information on anything from healthcare and housing to employability, finances, personal relationships, and more. The Veterans' Gateway can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.


The Veterans Gateway hosts a list of vacant places in veteran-specific accommodation around the country on [https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/finding\\_a\\_home](https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/finding_a_home).

[www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)

Telephone: 0808 802 1212

Text: 81212 to receive a call back.

## Appendix 1: Checklist

<b>Checklist</b>		
<b>Identifying Veterans</b>		
Review your key housing forms to ensure that they ask the 'veteran question.' (This may include the Housing Register form, homeless assessment form, referral form, new tenant form, support planning documents.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ensure staff are able to explain why this question is being asked, and understand the purpose of asking this question.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Armed Forces Covenant</b>		
Ensure staff understand what the Armed Forces Covenant is.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local Authorities - Review your Armed Forces Covenant action plan to ensure that it contains key housing pledges and actions to improve access to housing and support for Veterans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Housing Associations and Supported Housing Providers – Sign up to the Corporate Covenant	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Strategic Approach</b>		
Homelessness Reviews and Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies should specifically consider the needs of veterans to understand the nature and extent of homelessness amongst Veterans and their families and their wider housing and support needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Review membership of local Homelessness Forums / Alliances to include local Veterans charities and organisations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Consult with the Armed Forces Covenant when undertaking Homelessness Reviews and developing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ensure that Housing Strategies consider the housing needs of veterans where there is a local identified need.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Bespoke Advice and Information</b>		
Ensure bespoke and detailed information is available for service members and veterans on the range of available housing options and support organisations on Local Authority websites.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ensure that the website contains a link to the Veterans' Gateway	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ensure that all staff are aware of the Veterans' Gateway	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Work closely with local Armed Forces Charities to establish clear referral pathways.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Preventing Homelessness Amongst Veterans</b>	
Adopt an approach to early intervention and prevention by working with veterans from the point at which the 'Certificate of Cessation' is issued to ensure opportunities for homeless prevention are maximised. Ensure that procedures reflect this.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish a good working relationship with the Ministry of Defence to ensure that duty to refers are being made.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider the development of bespoke housing options where a need is identified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Homelessness</b>	
Develop a one-page summary covering homelessness and veterans for use by staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a list of supplementary questions to complement the homelessness assessment form for assessing priority need due to having served in the Armed Forces.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Social Housing</b>	
Review your allocations policy to ensure that it is legally compliant, and consider the adoption of best practice into your revised policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't take into account lump sum compensation linked to service when assessing eligibility to join the Housing Register.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extend local connection exemptions to divorced and separated spouses/civil partners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adopt a flexible approach to the five year local connection exemption.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consult with veteran's charities on any revised allocations policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider setting aside a proportion of properties for former members of the Armed Forces under a local lettings policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider working with Stoll through the VNS or set aside housing stock specifically for ex-Service personnel or their families.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider accepting referrals through the MOD Referrals Scheme.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider developing social housing specifically for veterans in response to locally identified need.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider how any new housing developments can take into account the needs of veterans by being accessible and not reinforcing trauma.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Identify if your new tenant is a veteran or a family member, by asking the veteran question, and then linking them in with relevant support.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Supported Housing</b>	
Ensure that new residents are asked the 'veteran question' and then linking them into the relevant support as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider prioritising vacancies for veterans.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that support planning takes into account any support needs that have arisen due to a client's service history, and links them into specialist support.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure staff are aware of all of the specialist help and provision to support successful move on.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Staff Knowledge and Awareness</b>	
Ensure that all staff know how to ask the 'veteran question' and why they are asking it.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure staff have a clear understanding of what steps must be taken with a veteran as soon as they are identified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure staff have up to date knowledge on what the legislation says in relation to veterans and housing that is relevant to their job.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that all frontline staff have access to training on veterans and housing, and that this is regularly refreshed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make sure staff are aware of national and local veteran's organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make contact with local veteran's organisations and establish good working relationships and an understanding of each other's roles.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure staff have access to resources and information.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Update policies and procedures so that staff have clear guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appoint a veteran champion within your organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>What can your organisation do as an employer?</b>	
Review your employee policies to ensure that you consider the needs of veterans and reservists.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review your own internal recruitment policies to consider how you can attract veterans.	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Appendix 2: About Homeless Link

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in England. We aim to develop, inspire, support, and sustain a movement of organisations working together to achieve positive futures for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

Representing over 900 organisations across England, we are in a unique position to see both the scale and nature of the tragedy of homelessness. We see the data gaps; the national policy barriers; the constraints of both funding and expertise; the system blocks and attitudinal obstacles. But crucially, we also see – and are instrumental in developing – the positive practice and ‘what works’ solutions.

As an organisation we believe that things can and should be better: not because we are naïve or cut off from reality, but because we have seen and experienced radical positive change in the way systems and services are delivered – and that gives us hope for a different future.

We support our members through research, guidance, and learning, and to promote policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

### What We Do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

## Homeless Link

Minorities House

2-5 Minorities

London

EC3N 1BJ

[www.homeless.org.uk](http://www.homeless.org.uk)

@HomelessLink

# Let's End Homelessness Together



Special thanks to our partners:



