



NO HOMELESS VETERANS

Toolkit – Scotland

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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 experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing 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 experience sleeping rough.

Statutory guidance in relation to housing and homelessness encourages more generous guidelines for veterans in relation to allocations and homelessness. Furthermore, there are 10,200¹ units of accommodation across the UK 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.

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

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.
- 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 1st 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.”²

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, including possible financial assistance.

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.

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.

² 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

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

Email: 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.

The Scottish Government continues to be an active member of the Armed Forces Covenant governance structure, including the Covenant Reference Group. The Scottish Government also continues to contribute to the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans annual report, which details how the principles of the Covenant are being delivered across the UK.

The Scottish Government continues to engage with the MOD as it seeks to further embed the Armed Forces Covenant into legislation through the Armed forces Bill introduced in January 2021.

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](#)³, and a list of signatories can be found on the [Government's website](#).⁴

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.

The Highland Council: Covenant Agreement

The Highland Council has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, and within their agreement they make a series of pledges to demonstrate their commitment including to work with the Armed Forces community to provide information and advice on housing options.

³ 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/#/>

⁴ 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>

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

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.

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.

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.

5. Strategic Approach

What Does the Legislation Say?

All Local Authorities have a statutory duty under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to carry out an assessment of homelessness in their area and to prepare and submit to Ministers their strategy on the prevention and alleviation of homelessness as part of the Local Housing Strategy.

Refreshed guidance published in September 2019 to support Local Authorities in preparing Local Housing Strategies encourages each authority to provide information on its approach to tackling homelessness.

Areas that the Scottish Government would expect to see addressed in relation to homelessness in the Local Housing Strategy includes:

- A summary of the Local Authority's approach to tackling homelessness.
- A focus on prevention and consolidation of the Housing Options approach.
- A summary of the appropriate support provision in place or being considered, to help those already experiencing homelessness and those at threat of experiencing homelessness. This should include a particular focus on how the requirements of the Housing Support duty are being addressed.
- Evidence of links to Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes.
- Consideration of the impact Welfare Reform has on the provision of temporary and support accommodation and clarification if hostel provision is still used by the Local Authority and what the future plans are for use of hostel provision and supported accommodation.
- Establishment of links between Local Housing Strategy and the local Housing Options Hub.
- A short summary of the Local Authority's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

The Strategy should consider people more likely to be at risk from experiencing homelessness, including those leaving the Armed Forces.

Guidance notes state that the Local Housing Strategy should set out the joined-up approach in place to deal with known milestones and anticipated changes of circumstance. Individuals at risk should be identified early through good planning and partnership working, with effective housing provision and related services in place.

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

It is recommended that when developing the Local Housing Strategy 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 Local Housing 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 including Veterans Scotland Housing Group; this will ensure a joined up strategic and improved operational response to meeting the housing needs of this client group. It is also important to consult with these groups when developing a new Strategy.

North Lanarkshire Council: Local Housing Strategy

North Lanarkshire's Local Housing Strategy 2021-26 specifically considers the needs of people in the Armed Forces and veterans. The Strategy seeks to strengthen the support for Armed Forces members and their families through further engagement with the community and their representatives. Through improvements to websites, leaflets and training of staff the Council intends to provide a better understanding of entitlements and an easier route to appropriate housing for veterans their families. The Council is also working with Veterans Scotland to develop new housing for the Armed Forces community in North Lanarkshire throughout the period of the Strategy.

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](#).⁵

Recommendations

- Local Housing 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 developing Local Housing Strategies.

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.

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

What Does the Legislation Say?

Local Authorities have a duty under Section 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to secure that advice and information about the prevention of homelessness and any services which may assist in the prevention of homelessness is available free of charge to any person in the area.

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.

Scottish Borders Council : Veteran's guide

Scottish Borders Council has produced a [bespoke guide](#)⁶ for veterans to assist them with the transition to civilian life. The guide provides a wide range of advice on a variety of topics, including a comprehensive chapter on housing and accommodation options.

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](#)⁷ 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.

The [Veterans Portal](#)⁸ provides links to key veteran support services and organisations.

⁶ Available from: https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/2180/civilian_life_in_the_borders

⁷ Available from: <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk>

⁸ Available from: www.theroyalregimentofscotland.org/associations/veterans-portal

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.
- 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

7.1 Homelessness Prevention

What Does the Legislation Say?

The Code of Guidance states that where someone is threatened with homelessness and has not been found to be intentionally threatened with homelessness, then the local Authority has a duty to take reasonable steps to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available.

The accommodation obtained for a person threatened with homelessness need not be their existing accommodation.

More generally the Local Authority has a duty to give advice and assistance to anyone threatened with homelessness.

7.2 Preventing Homelessness

The code of Guidance states that where people leaving the Armed Forces are in a position where their license to occupy service accommodation is due to expire and they have no other accommodation they should be regarded as being threatened with homelessness.

Early intervention is crucial when it comes to preventing homelessness. Local 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.

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.

The Code of Guidance states that the absence of certificate of cessation should not lead to an assumption that the applicant is not threatened with homelessness or experiencing homelessness on application to the Local Authority, and presentation of a certificate is not a condition of receiving assistance.

Housing Options Scotland- Military Matters

[Housing Options Scotland](https://housingoptionsscotland.org.uk/services/)⁹ helps disabled people, older adults, and members of the Armed Forces community to find the right home in the right place. The dedicated Military Matters Service provides a dedicated housing options service to members of the Armed Forces community and veterans.

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.

⁹ Available from: <https://housingoptionsscotland.org.uk/services/>

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.

SSAFA Glasgow's Helping Heroes – Veteran's Hub

The Veteran's Hub provides one point of contact via a Gateway model to improve access to a range of services for veterans, service personnel and their families, including financial, housing, and employability advice. The service includes a specialist Housing Advices who can help resolve legal issues or find emergency accommodation if needed.

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.
- 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

Personal housing plans are an important way to ensure people receive the support, information, and advice they need when experiencing homeless or threatened with the experience of homelessness.

The Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan explores the potential for a Scottish personal housing plan model.

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

What Does the Legislation Say?

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: For those serving in the Armed Forces changes to the 1987 Act were introduced (through the 2010 Act) which enable members of the Armed Forces to establish a local connection through residence or employment in the same way as a civilian. Members of the Armed Forces can establish a local connection through the fact of their service in an area.

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.

Recommendations

→ Develop a one-page summary covering homelessness and veterans for use by staff.

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.

What Does the Guidance Say?

The 2014 Act amended section 20 of the 1987 Act and sets out three categories of applicants who should be given reasonable preference in an allocations policy:

- Homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs.
- People who are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs.
- Tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord, which the social landlord selecting its tenants considers to be under-occupied.

There is also a range of other housing needs which landlords could consider if they are of particular importance to their local community or the wider group of communities in which they operate. A landlord could consider including them within its unsatisfactory housing conditions group. Another approach would be to give these housing needs a level of priority under the policy but not include them within the reasonable preference group.

The types of housing need which may fall into this group include those leaving the Armed Forces.

The Social Housing Allocations in Scotland Practice Guide provides guidance to social landlords in understanding the requirements and flexibilities of allocating social housing.

It states that landlords should consider and address the needs of ex-Service personnel as part of their allocations policies and procedures and ensure that they are not disadvantaged.

The guidance goes on to say that landlords should not refuse to consider an application simply because an applicant is living in suitable housing at the date of application. People in the Armed Forces should be encouraged to make a housing application well in advance of needing a new home.

In some cases, Service personnel may be leaving the Forces because of injury or disability and will require housing specifically adapted for their needs. Landlords should be ready to give special consideration to housing applications in these circumstances.

Landlords should also give special consideration to applications from those who leave the Armed Forces because of other exceptional circumstances. This could include applications from individuals whose spouse/civil partner is killed in action or dies before the date of discharge.

The Veterans' Homelessness Prevention Pathway Scotland states that where Armed Forces personnel do not have priority under an allocations scheme, social landlords should have a protocol for how they will assist Service leavers into a home of their own.

Local Connection: The Housing (Scotland) Act 2019 removed the exemptions for homelessness so that employment and residence through the Armed Forces creates a local connection in the same way that it does for civilians.

What Does the Legislation Say?

Where landlords use local connection as part of an allocation policy they should make sure it does not disadvantage ex-Service personnel. This is to ensure that ex-Service personnel are not at a disadvantage when applying for social housing due to Service time spent out of an area.

The legislation and guidance ensures that ex-Service personnel are not disadvantaged when applying for social housing due to their mobility as part of their Service career.

9.3 What Can We Do?

For Local Authorities and social landlords the first thing you should do is to ensure that your Allocations Policy is legally compliant in relation to veterans.

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, 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 policy could be applied whereby local connection can still be established some considerable time after the applicant lived in an area, by enabling former service personnel who have spent time serving in the local authority area at some point in their Service career to establish a local connection, this would provide a better offer to veterans and their families.

You could also expand your policy to ensure that 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.

Best practice approaches would also 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.

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 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.
- Extend the exemption from local connection to divorced and separated spouses/civil partners and partners of Armed Forces personnel.

- Adopt a more flexible approach to local connection 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.

South Lanarkshire Council: Priority for Armed Forces Personnel

Members of the Armed Forces who meet a set criteria are given the highest priority for housing, alongside homeless applicants and those with an urgent medical need.

To qualify veterans must have completed a minimum of three years' service or have been injured in action or been discharged on medical grounds and have a local connection with South Lanarkshire

The priority status is awarded for up to six months prior to, and up to six months following the date of discharge from Service.

Sheffield City Council: Additional Preference

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

Low Cost homeownership may be a viable option for some Members of the Armed Forces upon discharge.

There are a variety of low-cost home ownership schemes that Service and ex-Service personnel can apply for.

- **LIFT Open Market Shared Equity Scheme:** Current members of the Armed Forces of those who have left the Forces in the last two years may be eligible for up to 40% towards the cost of buying a home through the Scottish Government's LIFT Open market shared equity scheme. The scheme is also available to widow(er)s and other partners of service personnel whose partners has lost their life while serving in the Armed Forces within the last two years. The Scottish Government contributes between 10 and 40% towards the price of a home found on the open market.
- **New Supply Shared Equity:** Current members of the Armed Forces, those that left the Forces in the last two years, together with bereaved partners (for 2 years following the loss of their partner) qualify for the New Supply Shared Equity (NSSE) scheme. It assists those who want to buy a new build home from a Housing association or a local council. The Government will typically hold a 20-40% share in the property under a shared equity agreement.
- **Shared Ownership:** Veterans and members of the Armed Forces can access home ownership through shared ownership whereby they can buy a share of a home, rather than having to fund its entire cost, the share that can be purchased ranges from 25%, 50%, or 75%. The remaining share is owned by the social housing provider.

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.

In Scotland, funding continues to be available to deliver homes specifically for veterans where Local Authorities have identified this as a strategic priority. Since 2012, over £6m has been made available through the programme to deliver 100 homes for veterans.

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 veterans who had previously experienced homelessness 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.
- Encourage Armed Forces personnel to register for social housing as early as possible.
- Don't take into account lump sum compensation linked to service when assessing eligibility to join the Housing Register.
- Extend any local connection exemptions to divorced and separated spouses/civil partners.
- Adopt a flexible approach to local connection exemptions.
- 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](#)¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰ Veterans' Gateway (2022) Finding a Home. Available from:
https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/finding_a_home

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 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](#)¹¹ 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 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.

¹¹ Available from: <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/see-the-stars/independence-star/>

Recommendations

- Ensure that new residents are asked the 'veteran question' and then link 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.

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

Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP)

ASAP provides dedicated information, advice, and support to members of the Armed Forces Community in Scotland.

www.adviceasap.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

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

Forces Connect

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

Legion Scotland

The Royal British Legion Scotland (Legion Scotland) provides community friendship and practical advice to veterans.

<https://www.legionscotland.org.uk/who-we-help>

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>

Military Matters – Housing Options Scotland

Military Matters provides a service to members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families to find a suitable home.

<https://housingoptionsscotland.org.uk/services/#military>

Poppyscotland

Poppyscotland provides life-changing support to our Armed Forces community, working with those who have served, those still serving, and their families at times of crisis and need by offering vital, practical advice, assistance and funding.

www.poppyscotland.org.uk

Shelter Scotland

Shelter Scotland provide a range of advice and help on housing issues, including homelessness.

<https://scotland.shelter.org.uk>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Veterans Aid

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

www.veterans-aid.net

Freephone: 0800 012 6867

info@veterans-aid.net

Veterans Assist Scotland

Veterans Assist Scotland signpost and connect the veteran's community including their families, with the organisations and services best placed to help with the information, advice and support they need from across Scotland.

<http://www.veterans-assist.org>

Veterans First Point

Veterans First Point (V1P) has been developed for veterans for veterans and is staffed by an alliance of clinicians and veterans to provide advice and support.

<https://www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk>

Veterans Scotland

Veterans Scotland is a membership organisation which represents and supports the interests of 80 member organisations, and promotes mutually beneficial collaboration, in order to enhance the well-being of the Armed Forces and Veterans community across Scotland.

www.veteransscotland.co.uk

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.

www.veteransgateway.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 1212

Text: 81212 to receive a call back.

Appendix 1: Checklist

Checklist	
Identifying Veterans	
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.)	☐
Ensure staff are able to explain why this question is being asked, and understand the purpose of asking this question.	☐
Armed Forces Covenant	
Ensure staff understand what the Armed Forces Covenant is.	☐
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.	☐
Housing Associations and Supported Housing Providers – Sign up to the Corporate Covenant	☐
Strategic Approach	
Local Housing 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 developing Local Housing Strategies.	☐
Bespoke Advice and Information	
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.	☐
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.	☐
Preventing Homelessness Amongst Veterans	
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.	
Consider the development of bespoke housing options where a need is identified.	☐
Homelessness	
Develop a one-page summary covering homelessness and veterans for use by staff	☐
Social Housing	
Review your allocations policy to ensure that it is legally compliant, and consider the adoption of best practice into your revised policy.	☐
Encourage Armed Forces personnel to register for social housing as early as possible.	
Don't take into account lump sum compensation linked to service when assessing eligibility to join the Housing Register.	☐
Extend any local connection exemptions to divorced and separated spouses/civil partners	☐
Adopt a flexible approach to local connection exemptions.	☐
Consult with veteran's 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.	☐
Supported Housing	
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.	☐
Staff Knowledge and Awareness	
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 veteran's organisations	☐
Make contact with local veteran's 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	☐
What can your organisation do as an employer?	
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.	☐

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

@HomelessLink

Let's End Homelessness Together



Special thanks to our partners:

