



NO HOMELESS VETERANS Toolkit – Wales

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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’ organisations 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 experiencing 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 veterans. Furthermore, there are 10,200¹ 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.

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

Reasons for experiencing 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.

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.

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

3.3 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

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 Welsh Government has developed strong relationships with all its key partners, nurturing and promoting the Covenant in Wales. All 22 Local Authorities have signed a Community Covenant, showing their commitment to the Armed Forces community in Wales.

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 to 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.

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

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>

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?

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced a requirement for Local Authorities to carry out a homelessness review and to formulate a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.

The main elements required for homelessness strategies are based on the review and planning of activities to:

- Prevent homelessness.
- Secure accommodation for people who are experiencing homelessness or threatened with homelessness.
- Provide support.

The Guidance states that it is important to identify numbers and causes of repeat presenters and vulnerable groups including those leaving the Armed Forces.

The Homelessness Strategy must include provision for those who may be in particular need of support, including people leaving the regular Armed Forces of the Crown.

The introduction of the Housing Support Grant (HSG) provides an opportunity to produce a rationalised and coherent planning mechanism for the whole of the Housing System as it relates to preventing homelessness and providing the support to ensure people are appropriately housed. As such the Housing Support Programme Strategy is a single strategy which incorporates the Local Authority's statutory duty to produce a homelessness strategy and the strategic planning requirements of the HSG.

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 and needs assessments, 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 or reviewing the Housing Support Programme 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

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](#).⁵

Recommendations

- Housing Support Programme 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 reviewing and developing new Housing Support Programme 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?

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

Under section 60 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 Local Authorities have a duty to provide information, advice, and assistance in accessing help with housing.

The Local Housing Authority must, in particular by working with other public authorities, voluntary organisations, and other persons, ensure that the service is designed to meet the needs of groups at particular risk of experiencing homelessness, including people leaving the regular Armed Forces of the Crown.

Local Authorities are required to ensure that housing information and advice services are designed to meet the needs of vulnerable groups including people leaving the regular Armed Forces of the Crown.

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](#)⁶ 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.
- Ensure that the website contains a link to the Veterans' Gateway.

⁶ Available from: <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk>

- 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.

It also requires housing authorities to help people who are experiencing homelessness to secure accommodation.

7.1 National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel

The Welsh Government has developed the [National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel](#)⁷ in response to one of the key concerns of serving personnel of leaving the Armed Forces – which is finding suitable accommodation and how to access help. The Pathway provides Service Personnel with clarity and support around their discharge, housing options, and the available sources of assistance with housing.

7.2 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.

The Code of Guidance states that 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.

⁷ Available from: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/national-housing-pathway-for-ex-service-personnel.pdf>

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.

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](#)⁸ allows defence personnel to apply for an advance of salary loan to help meet the cost of a deposit for a rental property.

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.

⁸ Available from: [Help to secure a rental home: the MOD Tenancy Deposit Loan Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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 a 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

Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, if an applicant is experiencing homelessness or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, an assessment of their housing and support needs must be conducted. The Local Authority is required to take reasonable steps to help prevent or relieve homelessness.

Although not a requirement in law, Welsh Government recommends that it would be best practice for Local Authorities to adopt a system of utilising a Personal Housing Plan when supporting an applicant to deliver reasonable steps

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, in order to determine if a fully homelessness duty exists.

What Does the Legislation Say?

Priority Need: Under s70 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 people who have served in the regular Armed Forces of the Crown and who have experienced homelessness since leaving those Forces are recognised as being in priority need.

Someone may also be in priority need if they are vulnerable for some special reason.

Veterans may also experience difficulties post discharge in adjusting to civilian life. This may include late onset trauma, mental health difficulties, problems associated with physical injury, and substance misuse. These difficulties may lead to a loss of their home or a breakdown in their relationship.

When assessing whether a veteran is in priority need, it is important to consider if they are vulnerable due to some other special reason, which could include having served in the Armed Forces.

In assessing this you may wish to take into account the following:

- The length of time spent serving in the Armed Forces, although vulnerability could 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 history, providing a possible indication of serious health problems or post-traumatic stress.
- Whether HM Forces' medical and welfare advisers have judged an individual to be particularly vulnerable and have issued a Medical History Release Form providing a summary of the circumstances causing vulnerability.
- The length of time since the applicant left the Armed Forces and whether they have been able to access and sustain accommodation during that time.
- Whether the applicant has any existing support networks, including family or friends.

Consultation on Post-Pandemic Interim Homelessness Measures

At the beginning of the pandemic an emergency homelessness response was put in place, and the Welsh Government issued statutory guidance notes which expanded the definition of vulnerability to include COVID-19.

Anyone during the pandemic who is experiencing street homelessness or faced with experiencing street homelessness is considered less able than an ordinary person to fend for himself or herself and would suffer more harm than an ordinary homeless person would suffer and as such would be considered vulnerable and be considered to be in priority need.

During 2019 and 2020 Welsh Government commissioned a review of priority need, this was undertaken prior to the pandemic.

In June 2022 the Welsh Government launched a consultation to gather the views on expanding the definition of priority need to include a person sleeping rough.

What Does the Legislation Say?

Intentionally Homeless: 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.

What Does the Legislation Say?

Local Connection: Serving members of the Armed Forces and other persons who normally live with them as part of their household, do establish a local connection with an area by virtue of serving, or having served there while in the Forces.

Local Authorities must consider periods of time spent by an applicant in their area in the Armed Forces as relevant to the assessment of the applicant's local connection to that area in relation to their application for homelessness assistance or social housing.

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

Additional Preference – What Does the Legislation Say?

Section 167(2) of the 1996 Act gives Local Authorities the power to frame their allocation scheme so as to give additional preference to particular description of people who fall within the reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs. A Local Authority should consider giving additional preference to:

- Those who need to move to suitable adapted accommodation because of a serious injury, medical condition, or disability which they, or a member of their household, has sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces.
- People needing accommodation as a result of leaving the Armed Forces and the loss of military accommodation.

Local Authorities should ensure that those who need to move to suitable adapted accommodation because of a serious injury, medical condition or impairment which he or she, or a member of their households sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces should be given additional preference, alongside those who need accommodation as a result of leaving the Armed Forces.

Local Connection – What Does the Legislation Say?

The Act enables Local Authorities to determine priorities in relation to applicants who fall within the reasonable preference categories by taking a number of factors into account which includes local connection.

“For the purposes of the 2014 Act Serving members of the Armed Forces, and other persons who normally live with them as part of their household, do establish a local connection with an area by virtue of serving, or having served, there while in the Forces.”

The Code of Guidance goes on to say it would be good practice for applications to be accepted from those currently living in institutional arrangements where they have a connection with the area and they have a date for discharge that is not unreasonably distant from the date of application, this includes people leaving the Armed Forces.

Changes to allocations legislation allows 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.

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 policy could be applied whereby the local connection exemptions also apply to former service personnel who have spent time serving in the Local Authority area at some point in their Service career, 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 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.
- Expand the exemption from local connection to all veterans, not just serving personnel.
- 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.

Blaenau Gwent Council: Additional Preference

Blaenau Gwent's housing allocations policy places an Armed Forces applicant who needs to leave the Armed Forces and military accommodation, together with the bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces who need to leave service accommodation, in the highest band.

Caerphilly Council: Additional Preference

Caerphilly Council has adopted a more flexible approach within its allocation policy and has expanded the provision of additional preference to include those that left the Armed Forces in the last five year, with provision to extend this further in extenuating circumstances.

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

Members of the Armed Forces have priority for a number of low-cost home ownership schemes.

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

- [Help to Buy Wales](#)⁹ is an initiative that provides shared equity loan assistance to home buyers from Help to Buy (Wales) Limited (HtBW) with funding provided by Welsh Government.
- **Rent First** is a Welsh Government scheme which provides rented housing at intermediate rents and gives tenants an opportunity to buy their property outright. Local Councils can allocate funding for the scheme through their Social Housing Grant allocation.
- [Homebuy Scheme](#)¹⁰ – veterans in Wales have a priority status in the Welsh Government's Homebuy Scheme. Bereaved spouses of service personnel who have been killed in service are also eligible for the scheme.
- **The Forces Help to Buy Scheme** allows Service personal to borrow up to 50% of their annual salary (to a maximum of £25,000) to help buy a home.

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 Available from: <https://gov.wales/help-buy-wales>

¹⁰ Available from: <https://gov.wales/homebuy-wales>

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 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.
- Don't take into account lump sum compensation linked to service when assessing eligibility to join the Housing Register.
- Expand local connection exemptions to all veterans, not just serving members of the Armed Forces.
- Extend 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](#)¹¹ 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.

¹¹ Veterans' Gateway (2022) Finding a Home. Available from:
https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/finding_a_home

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 those aged over 60 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 experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. 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.

Alabaré and Grwp Cynefin

Alabaré in partnership with Grwp Cynefin have developed supported accommodation for 9 veterans in Conwy. This is the first dedicated facility for veterans in Conwy County. Alongside the accommodation, residents can access the training and skills needed for independent living including budgeting, healthy eating, shopping, and life skills.

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](https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/see-the-stars/independence-star/)¹² 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.

¹² Available from: <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/see-the-stars/independence-star/>

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.

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

Alabaré – Homes for Veterans Wales

Alabaré provide dedicated support to veterans in North and South Wales – specifically Swansea, Carmarthen, Clydach, Cardiff, Pontypridd and Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales, and Glan Conwy, Lladudno Junction and Colwyn Bay in North Wales.

www.alabare.co.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.

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 Cymru

Shelter provides a range of advice on all housing matters, including homelessness.

0345 0755005

<https://sheltercymru.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 Wales

Provides help for veterans who are experiencing mental health difficulties related specifically to their military service.

Any veteran living in Wales who has served at least one day with the British Military as either a regular service member or as a reservist who has a 'service related psychological injury' can be referred via the referral page.

<http://veteran.rhyswelshdemo.co.uk/how-to-self-refer/refer-someone-else.html>

<https://www.veteranswales.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	
Housing Support Programme 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 reviewing and developing new Housing Support Programme Strategies.	☐
Ensure that Housing Strategies consider the housing needs of veterans where there is a local identified need.	☐
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	☐
Develop a list of supplementary questions to complement the homelessness assessment form for assessing priority need due to having served in the Armed Forces.	☐
Social Housing	
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.	☐
Expand local connection exemptions to all veterans, not just serving members of the Armed Forces	
Extend 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 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.	☐
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:

