

Supporting the Armed Forces community with Housing in Scotland

A Best Practice Guide



poppy 
scotland

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About Poppyscotland

Poppyscotland provides life-changing support to our Armed Forces community. We are best known for running the iconic Scottish Poppy Appeal but we work all year round to reach out to those who have served, those still serving, and their families at times of crisis and need by offering vital, practical advice, assistance and funding. As well as directly funding home improvements and adaptations, much of the money we raise goes to support housing for veterans and their families. We work in close partnership with a range of organisations including: Erskine, Veterans Housing Scotland, Scottish Veterans Residences and Housing Options Scotland.

For further information, please visit:
www.poppyscotland.org.uk



For information on this document please email:
PublicAffairsScotland@poppyscotland.org.uk

About Veterans Scotland

Veterans Scotland, a charity registered in 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. It achieves this by influencing and informing Scottish and Local Government, and linked organisations, to promote the understanding of their obligations to the Armed Forces Covenant, hence improving its delivery across Scotland. We encourage the sharing of good practices, reducing duplication of effort and sharing resources where appropriate. We seek to encourage and promote services available that support members of the Armed Forces and Veterans Community from statutory, third sector and Service charities widely.

For further information, please visit:
www.veteransscotland.co.uk



A larger copy print version of this document is available on request.



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Foreword

Poppyscotland is at the heart of Scotland's support network for our Armed Forces community – ensuring their unique contribution is never forgotten. Whilst the vast majority of serving personnel, veterans and their families make a successful transition into civilian life, leading fulfilling lives and making a positive contribution to our local communities, some may require additional support. Poppyscotland is here to provide and secure that support.

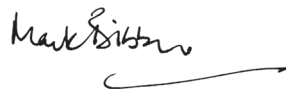
Many of the people we help require assistance to find suitable, good quality, and sustainable accommodation after leaving the Armed Forces. Requests for help can cover the entire spectrum; from those who have the means but simply don't know where to look for a new home, to those who are facing the worst forms of homelessness and find themselves sleeping rough. Regardless, no one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face any form of homelessness and Poppyscotland will always be here to support those in need of assistance.

We do not provide this support in isolation. Poppyscotland works at its best when we work in partnership with local statutory services and other charitable organisations. The sharing of expertise, resources, and experience between

statutory services and other charities results in quick and effective action to support those most in need. You will read in the following pages examples of these partnerships in action, and hopefully take inspiration from them.

Since the Armed Forces Covenant was enshrined in legislation in 2011 and reinforced by local community pledges up and down the country, significant progress has been achieved in addressing disadvantage and providing special treatment where appropriate. However, there is always more we can do to ensure we are making a tangible difference to the lives of our local Armed Forces community, and we will continue to work in partnership with local government to ensure this happens.

I hope the following pages will be a welcome resource for social housing providers and that our recommendations will be acted upon. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with local government and other key service providers to fully implement the Armed Forces Covenant, and help to improve the lives of the Armed Forces community.



Mark Bibbey

Chief Executive of Poppyscotland



Foreword

This guidance has been written to help social housing providers to pro-actively discharge their duties to members of the Armed Forces community.

Veterans Scotland recognises that for many veterans and their families, aspects of life after leaving the Services can be challenging. With over 50 veterans' organisations in Scotland alone, Veterans Scotland understands that it can be frustrating to find just the right person to help with a problem.

The Housing Group aims to establish cooperation and coordination between Veterans Housing Organisations in Scotland, to act as a focus point for all matters relating to homelessness and housing support for the ex-Service community within Scotland. The sources of support chapter in this guide helps achieve just that.

We would encourage you to read this guide and share it widely with colleagues as you assist veterans with housing support.

There is a great deal of support available from veterans charities and we look forward to working with you to make sure that everyone in the Armed Forces community can find "the right house, in the right place."



Moira Bayne

Chair, Veterans Scotland Housing Group



Introduction

In 2011 the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant were enshrined in legislation as a result of campaigning by Poppyscotland's parent charity, The Royal British Legion. Since then, national, devolved, and local government, along with numerous charities and over 3,000 businesses and other organisations, have committed to ensuring that the key principles are upheld:

- Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and private sector services; and
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

Today, every local authority in Great Britain and a number in Northern Ireland have made a public commitment to uphold the Covenant's key principles and implement them in their work serving their communities. In Scotland, Ministers have published a blueprint for how the Scottish Government will give effect to the Armed Forces Covenant and strengthen support for veterans. "Our Commitments: Scottish

Government Support for the Armed Forces Community" pledges that no member of the Armed Forces, Service family member, or veteran in Scotland should face disadvantage when accessing services and support because of their Service.

While defence remains a reserved issue, the Scottish Government recognises that many of the issues that veterans and their support networks face are directly impacted by devolved matters, such as employment, health, education and housing. Scotland's 32 local authorities also play a frontline role in the provision of assistance and accommodation for veterans and their families, and are a key Covenant delivery partner. Indeed, in 2015, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner published a report on housing that made twelve recommendations, many of them aimed at local authorities. Whilst the Commissioner's 2019 follow up report found that welcome progress had been made in nine of these recommendations, the three outstanding recommendations demonstrate there is still more that local authorities in particular can do in this space.

Although homelessness and rough sleeping is not as high among the veteran population as many people think, some veterans still find it difficult to source suitable accommodation after leaving



the Armed Forces. Over the past year, housing has consistently remained one of the top three reasons for people to contact the Veterans' Gateway. Given the number of charitable organisations out there and the statutory provisions already in place, it is within the reach of all of us to bring the number of homeless veterans in Scotland as far as possible down to zero.

Poppyscotland is proud to be at the forefront of seeking the Covenant's effective implementation across Scotland. As part of this work, we have produced this new guide, which is intended to provide local authorities and housing associations with practical information on how to support members of the Armed

Forces community seeking housing advice, or who are facing a housing problem or impending homelessness. We hope this publication will act as a valuable resource for all frontline professionals providing housing and homelessness services to veterans, by:

- Highlighting the common problems faced by the Armed Forces community in relation to housing and homelessness;
- Outlining the existing responsibilities of government and housing authorities;
- Providing a toolkit of practical advice on how to improve services to the Armed Forces community; and
- Identifying good practice from across Scotland as a source of inspiration.

Chapter One

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

The prevalence of veteran homelessness

There remains a popular misconception among the British public that homelessness is both a common outcome of leaving the Armed Forces and that a large proportion of those who sleep rough in the UK are veterans. The reality is that the majority of veterans manage the transition into a new home successfully, with a relatively low number of veterans experiencing difficulties so great that they become homeless or end up rough sleeping.

Research by the University of York in 2018 looked at the numbers across Great Britain in detail and concluded that the number of rough sleeping veterans is in the hundreds, and that there are over 1,000 urgent cases of homelessness and 3,000 to 4,000 veterans in urgent housing need over any given year. However, these figures are based on estimates due to the limited availability of accurate official data. In June 2018, the Scottish Government published homelessness statistics that showed about 3% of applicants for housing were previously in the Armed Forces.

Nonetheless, this does not diminish the importance of acting to reduce instances of homelessness and rough sleeping among

veterans. No one who has served in the UK's Armed Forces should have to face homelessness or be forced to sleep rough.

Why might a veteran be faced with homelessness?

The causes of homelessness will largely be the same as for civilians. There are, however, a few circumstances specific to a veteran's life that can increase the likelihood of them becoming homeless:

- **Poorly managed or unexpectedly early transition out of the Forces.** In 2019, three-quarters of Service personnel lived in Service accommodation during the working week. On leaving the Armed Forces, these personnel will need to find a new place to live. The Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services (SPACES) has supported an average of 1,000 single veterans a year, 84% of whom report that their homelessness was a consequence of discharge from the Armed Forces.
- **Unrealistic expectations of housing options outside of the Armed Forces.** "The Transition Mapping Study 2013" carried out by the Forces in Mind Trust illustrated low levels of awareness among departing

Service personnel about what is required to buy or rent on the private market in the UK.

- **Emergence of, or return to, pre-existing vulnerabilities.**

Some personnel leave the Armed Forces and return to a lifestyle that was previously chaotic, which can reignite vulnerabilities that may have existed prior to joining the Armed Forces.

Whether as a result of a poorly managed transition out of the Armed Forces, or a problem arising some time after leaving Service, Scotland's veterans can be better supported out of homelessness.

Local Authority Duty to Support Homeless Veterans

If a former member of the Armed Forces becomes homeless, it is vital that they receive information and support at the earliest opportunity. Timely and appropriate interventions addressing the housing needs of those who are at risk of homelessness can reduce the likelihood of rough sleeping.

If a veteran becomes homeless, or is threatened with homelessness, local authorities have a legal duty to:

- Help a veteran who finds themselves homeless

- Give information and advice on homelessness and how to prevent it
- Provide accommodation, temporary (hostels, hotels, bed and breakfasts) or otherwise.

Improving homelessness services

- **Identifying veterans as early as possible.** Make it standard practice to ask all applicants for local services if they, or a member of their household, have ever served in HM Armed Forces. Poppyscotland and The Royal British Legion has long called on all public bodies to "ask the question" at the first point of contact with members of the public. Some veterans can be reluctant to disclose former Service in the Armed Forces, so it is important to explain why the question is being asked. 'Asking the question' allows identified veterans to be pointed to specialised routes of support and ensures they are given the most appropriate help quickly.

- **Provide emergency out of hours contact for veterans.** Veterans who either are, or face becoming homeless may need help any time of day. It is therefore important that local authority offices, websites, and other public spaces such as libraries and community centres provide an emergency or out of hours number or contact details.

- **Provide specialist advice and information.** Have a clear understanding of what steps must be undertaken with a veteran applicant as soon as they are identified – whether it is at the stage of providing initial advice, undertaking a prevention or relief duty, or the main housing duty. Each local authority will approach this differently and build their own pathways, but this should include:
 - **Signposting to nationwide specialist charities for additional support.** There are many Armed Forces charities operating throughout Scotland and the UK and the choice can be confusing. Veterans' Gateway was established to be a first point of contact for veterans seeking support and can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Gateway can provide help from specialist housing advisers. More information is in Chapter Four.
 - **Connecting with local Armed Forces charities.** National charities may be based in your local area, or there may be smaller charities with a specific geographic footprint. Build connections with them and work in partnership to support veterans and their families.
- **Use the Veterans Portal.** Embed and promote on your website the Veterans Portal on www.mygov.scot, which contains a dedicated housing section clearly setting out housing options and how veterans can gain access to more tailored advice.
- **Link to housing allocations.** If appropriate, ensure the veteran is directed to housing allocations so that they can be housed as soon as possible. This is explored in further detail in Chapter Two.

Best Practice Examples

The Highland Council

Has demonstrated its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by publishing its own localised Covenant and establishing a Highland Armed Forces & Veterans Community Covenant Partnership (HAFVCCP) to oversee its implementation. The HAFVCCP has agreed that housing should be one of the five key outcomes to support the Armed Forces community.

A large population of serving personnel and their families live within the geographic boundaries of The Highland Council. The Council and its partners are therefore working with colleagues in the Armed Forces to ensure provision of targeted housing information and advice to Service personnel, helping them to consider and plan for their future housing needs as early as possible.

Within the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal, £3 million has also been allocated to assist in the delivery of innovative assisted living projects that use the latest healthcare technologies to enable elderly people to live in their communities, reducing the need for admission to hospitals and/or care homes. It is intended that this project will include a cluster of homes in Inverness to suit the needs of veterans, and a multi-agency team has been established to take the project forward.

Scottish Borders Council

Has produced a tailored guide for Service leavers and veterans to assist them with transition to civilian life. Covering a wide range of topics, including employability and healthcare, the first chapter of the guide is dedicated to housing. A comprehensive housing chapter provides information regarding local housing policy, general housing support provision, and tailored support available to veterans and their families.



Chapter Two

Housing Allocations

Many members of our Armed Forces community who apply for social housing find that this is not always a smooth process and seek help from military charities to navigate their way through what can be a complex process. The “UK Household Survey of the ex-Service community 2014” carried out by The Royal British Legion in partnership with Poppyscotland, found that 6% of those who had been discharged from the Armed Forces in the past five years experienced some difficulty in applying for council or housing association accommodation.

Local Connection

In Scotland, everyone aged 16 and over is entitled to be admitted to a housing list regardless of whether they have a local connection or not. Priority for social housing is based on an assessment of an applicant’s need and circumstances

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 removed the exemptions around local connection for homelessness so that employment and residence through the Armed Forces is equal to that of civilians for creating a local connection. Where landlords use local connection as part of an allocation policy, they should make

sure it does not disadvantage ex-Service personnel. The legislation is intended to ensure that ex-Service personnel are not disadvantaged when applying for social housing on account of their mobility during Service, which can result in time spent outside of an area.

Reasonable Preference

The Housing (Scotland) 2014 Act allows landlords to give priority to ex-Service personnel in their allocation policy. This can be done so long as it is not at the expense of the three reasonable preference categories set out in legislation.

Extract from the Scottish Government's Social Allocations in Scotland Housing Practice Guide published in February 2019

Page 52 – People leaving the Armed Forces.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 removed the exemptions around local connection for homelessness so that employment and residence through the Armed Forces is equal to that of civilians for creating a local connection. 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 without an area.

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 or civil partner is killed in action or dies before the date of discharge.



Extract from the Scottish Government's Social Allocations in Scotland Housing Practice Guide published in February 2019

Page 32 – reference to reasonable preference to ex Service personnel.

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 allocation policy. These are:

- 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; and
- tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord, which the social landlord selecting its tenants considers to be under occupied.

Landlords can take the needs of other groups into account, as well as the reasonable preference groups, and can create other needs groups, such as giving priority to ex-service personnel. However, any other groups being prioritised for allocations must not dominate an allocation policy at the expense of the three reasonable preference groups in the 2014 Act.



Best Practice Example

Glasgow City Council

Uses a model whereby housing associations including Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) and Link Housing Association (LHA) provide housing support. GHA has now set aside 10 homes per year specifically for former Armed Forces personnel, while LHA has put in place procedures to recognise the challenges faced by people leaving or being discharged from the Armed Forces. LHA has put in place specific procedures to recognise the challenges faced by people leaving or being discharged from the Armed Forces. For example, when assessing applications from ex-Service personnel they will:

- Give consideration to injured ex-Service personnel who require adapted housing as a result of their injury/disability
- Not impose residency or local connection criteria that may disadvantage ex-Service personnel from fair and equal access to housing and
- Be mindful and supportive of the needs of individuals whose spouse or civil partner is killed in action or dies before their discharge date.

Allocating Housing

How an individual social landlord allocates their properties is set out in the Landlords' Allocation Policy. Allocations are based on housing need and any priority for housing is based on the individual and their current circumstances. Some social landlords have specific policies that give priority to Service leavers; however, these vary across Scotland. Nonetheless, it is important to ensure that veteran

applicants are informed of local policies that will affect them in the area they want to live.

In February 2019, the Scottish Government published a "Social Housing Allocations in Scotland - A Practice Guide," to help social landlords understand the requirements and the flexibilities they have in allocating their housing stock. The guide provides comprehensive information on social

housing allocations in Scotland, including the following concerning veterans:

- 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.
- In some cases, Service personnel may be leaving the Armed 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 guidance also highlights that people leaving the Armed Forces should have their additional housing needs also recognised within housing allocation policies. These needs could be:

- Domestic abuse;
- Other harassment or abuse;
- Insecure accommodation;
- Needing an adapted or accessible home;
- Social, community or family support.

If serving personnel are expecting to leave the Armed Forces in the near future, they are able to access a *Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Accommodation*. This will allow the local authority or housing association to know the date the individual has to leave Service provided accommodation by, in order to offer advice on any application for social housing and other housing options.

However, as stated in the 2018 "Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces and Ex-Service Personnel," serving members of the Armed Forces do not need to wait for a Notice to Vacate (NTV) or the *Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Accommodation* before applying to register on a housing allocation list.

Best Practice Example

South Lanarkshire Council

To reflect the valuable contribution that Armed Forces personnel make to society, members of HM Armed Forces who meet certain criteria are considered to have the highest priority for housing, along with homeless applicants and those with an urgent medical need. This has been the case since August 2010.

To receive this level of priority, the veteran must have completed a minimum of three years' service or have been injured in action or have been discharged on medical grounds; and

- lived in South Lanarkshire immediately prior to commencing service; or
- have a partner who is permanently resident in South Lanarkshire or previously lived in South Lanarkshire immediately prior to commencement of service, marriage or relationship; or
- have parents or kinship care who are permanently resident within South Lanarkshire; or
- have an offer of full-time employment within South Lanarkshire.

The priority status is awarded up to six months prior to, and up to six weeks following, the date of discharge from Service (proof of discharge date/discharge certificate needs to be provided). The Council is currently consulting on a proposal to extend the period in which priority status can be awarded after discharge from six weeks to six months.

To be awarded priority the applicant must make reasonable choices about where they wish to live and the type of property they wish to live in. They cannot be restrictive in their choices.

At the start of each financial year, letting targets are set against each of their four housing lists. The Urgent Housing Need list, where applicants from HM Armed Forces are queued, currently receives between 50-60% of all lets.

Improving Housing Allocation Services

- **People in the Armed Forces should be encouraged to make a housing application well in advance of needing a new home.**

It is crucial that Service personnel begin thinking about their future housing needs for themselves and their families at an early opportunity. It is never too early to start thinking about these things.

- **Identify veterans as early as possible.** Make it standard practice to ask all housing applicants if they, or a member of their household, have ever served in HM Armed Forces.

- **Train Staff.** Ensure staff in your organisation are aware of relevant legislation and procedures, including any reasonable preference policies due to members of the Armed Forces community.

- **Signpost to nationwide specialist charities for additional support.** There are many Armed Forces charities operating throughout Scotland and the UK and the choice can be confusing. Veterans' Gateway was established to be a first point of contact for veterans seeking support and can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The

Gateway can provide help for specialist housing advisers. The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) can also provide assistance. More information is available in Chapter Four.

- **Review Housing Allocation Policies.** Have a system in place for reviewing allocation policies regularly and consult with Armed Forces charities to implement the best possible service to members of the Armed Forces community. A standard review cycle is normally between three and five years.

Best Practice Examples

North Ayrshire Council

In May 2019, North Ayrshire Housing Register landlords implemented changes following a review of the North Ayrshire Housing Allocations Policy. One of the changes made was to increase the number of points awarded to veterans and Armed Forces personnel. Previously, 75 points were awarded for a period of 6 months to veterans who had a confirmed discharge date. This has now been increased to 150 points for a period of 12 months following discharge if the applicant has no home or settled accommodation.

North Lanarkshire Council

Is working closely with partners, including Veterans Housing Scotland, to provide accommodation for former Service personnel, with a particular focus on those who have a disability. The Council has provided land to Veterans Housing Scotland for them to build 13 new homes for disabled veterans in Motherwell and Wishaw. The Council is also working in partnership with Veterans Housing Scotland to deliver a further six new homes as part of a 40 unit new build development in Coatbridge, which was completed in August 2019, and is supportive of developing a further eight new homes proposed within Wishaw, subject to statutory consents.

The Council has a nominated officer within each local housing office who provides housing options advice to current Armed Forces personnel and veterans. They also award additional points through the allocation policy to those who are due to be discharged from the Armed Forces and require accommodation.





Chapter Three

Identifying our Armed Forces community

Ask the question

Providing specialised support is dependent upon members of the Armed Forces community being identified. Poppyscotland has supported many members of the Armed Forces who did not receive the support they would expect, or that would most benefit both them and the statutory provider. This was either because they were not given the opportunity to disclose their Service in the Armed Forces or because the authority did not know what to do next with the identified veterans and their families.

Poppyscotland recommends asking a question that will identify:

- Former members of HM Armed Forces, Regular and Reserve
- The spouse or partner of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
- Widow(er)s of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
- Dependent children of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
- Recently divorced or separated spouses or partners of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces

Without understanding the need to ask the question and without knowing what tailored support will follow the identification of a veteran, frontline staff may neglect to ask. Therefore, we recommend that all public bodies emphasise the purpose and importance of asking the question during staff training and that staff are fully aware of the service they should be providing to members of the Armed Forces community.

If a member of the Armed Forces community is approaching a housing authority on the advice of a military charity, it is likely that the veteran has been encouraged to disclose their previous Service in the Armed Forces and that they have had their Service verified by the referring charity already. If that is not the case and verification is required, the authority and the veteran should contact Veterans UK to verify past Service.

Veterans UK: **www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk**

Email: **veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk**
Freephone (UK only): **0808 1914 2 18**;
Telephone (overseas): **+44 1253 866 043**

Experience of a Service Leaver

For Service leavers coming to the end of a long career, the likelihood is they will have been preparing for their return to civilian life for some time and be ready for their discharge from the Armed Forces. 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*. Sometimes, it is those who leave the Armed Forces unexpectedly early who experience difficulties in settling back into civilian life. A Short Notice Discharge, for example as a result of disciplinary action or misconduct, can give personnel as little as 28 days' notice to vacate Service-provided accommodation and return to civilian life. Information is available to personnel preparing to leave the Armed Forces by the Ministry of Defence through the Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO). There will be circumstances where personnel are advised by JSHAO to approach a housing authority and apply for social housing or make a homeless application if threatened with homelessness.

It is possible that housing authorities will be approached by people who are still serving in the Armed Forces and who are preparing for their transition into civilian accommodation. In these cases, documentation giving notice to vacate Service accommodation should be accepted as proof of being threatened with homelessness.

Documentation on discharge

Personnel may be given several pieces of documentation during the 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 to a local authority. Adding advice that these documents may be useful to the information on your housing authority website will help applicants from the Armed Forces community be better prepared when approaching a council or housing association for support.

Definition of a veteran from Ministry of Defence 2018, *The Strategy for our Veterans*

“The Government defines a veteran as anyone who has served for at least one day in Her 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. Some non-governmental organisations have other definitions, though these differences are minor.”

Remember that any household that contains a veteran or serving people, as described above, will be entitled to the special provisions described in previous chapters. 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 a family member is and they are therefore a member of an Armed Forces household.

Veteran ID Cards

From 2019, some veterans may be in possession of a Veteran ID card. This should help verify Service more quickly. 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 in the other methods outlined in this document.

Further assistance

Guides and e-learning modules for local authority staff are available from the Armed Forces Covenant website: **www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/localauthorities**

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: **www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao**

Chapter Four

Key Sources of Support

There are many Armed Forces charities and it can be confusing to navigate through them all to find the best source of support for a member of the Armed Forces community in need. This chapter highlights key sources of support that simplify the process of finding appropriate assistance.

Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP)

ASAP provides free, confidential, impartial information, advice and support to people who:

- are currently serving in the Armed Forces, either Regular or Reserve, or a dependent of someone who is
- have served in the Armed Forces, either Regular or Reserve, or a dependent of someone who has
- are members of the Merchant Navy who served in a commercial vessel in support of legally defined UK military operations, or a dependent.

Their advice covers a range of areas, including benefits, debt, employment, relationships and housing. ASAP can be contacted by getting in touch with a local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Web: www.adviceasap.org.uk
Telephone: 0808 800 1007

Veterans' Gateway

Veterans' Gateway is a first point of contact for veterans seeking support across the UK. They put veterans and their families in touch with the organisations best placed to help with the information, advice and support they need – from healthcare and housing to employability, finances, personal relationships and more. Veterans' Gateway can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Telephone: 0808 802 1212

Text: 81212 to receive a call back.

Web: www.veteransgateway.org.uk

The website hosts a housing options portal that lists vacant space in veteran-specific accommodation provided by Cobseo Housing Cluster members and Veterans' Gateway supporters. This ranges from specialist hostel and supported housing projects to family accommodation. These pages are updated fortnightly and all housing providers that support the veteran community can request listing on the portal via: enquiries@veteransgateway.org.uk

The portal is accessed via https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/finding_a_home

Veterans Assist Scotland Website

This website has been set up to put in one place most of the resources veterans might need, whether it is finding the right school or college; options for somewhere to live; getting access to a War Disablement Pension; or finding a route into employment. Some topics are duplicated under more than one heading: this is for ease of access and to make it more likely that someone will find what they need.

Web: www.veterans-assist.org

Housing Options Scotland - Military Matters

Housing Options Scotland's Military Matters project provides housing information, advice and support to members of the Armed Forces community (serving or veterans), in any tenure of housing in all 32 local authorities of Scotland.

Web: www.housingoptionsscotland.org.uk

Telephone: 0131 2471400

Email: militarymatters@housingoptionsscotland.org.uk

Erskine

Erskine provides a mixture of 44 independent family cottages, 24 supported single occupancy temporary apartments and five assisted living apartments on their Bishopton site. They welcome applications from veterans looking to make a home for life or who are in need of more support to assist in sourcing long term accommodation, employment opportunities and welfare advice.

Telephone: 0141 812 1100

Web: www.erskine.org.uk

Haig Housing Trust (Scotland)

Haig Housing Trust provides general needs housing for veterans in Scotland with 90 two and three bed homes on 6 estates in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Hamilton. The Trust also provides bespoke housing solutions for seriously injured or wounded serving personnel and veterans.

Telephone: 020 8685 5777

Web: www.haighousing.org.uk

Email: enquiries@haighousing.org.uk

Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)

Dowding House is a sheltered housing development situated in the town of Moffat in Dumfries & Galloway. 26 one-bedroomed properties are provided for those aged 60 or over who have served in the RAF or are the spouse, widow or widower of an RAF veteran.

Telephone: **0800 018 2361**

Veterans Housing Scotland

Veterans Housing Scotland is the operational name of The Scottish Veterans' Garden City Association (Inc) (SVGCA), which together with its sister organisation, The Scottish Garden City Housing Society Ltd (SGCHS), provides housing to veterans who are injured or disabled across Scotland. Founded in 1915, SVGCA is one of Scotland's oldest military charities.

Telephone: **0131 5571188**

Website: **www.svgca.org.uk**

Email: **admin@svgca.org.uk**

Scottish Veterans Residences (SVR)

Scottish Veterans Residences (SVR) provides supported accommodation in Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow for veterans and ex-Merchant Mariners, with 159 rooms/flats and 46 secure tenancies. They also provide short or long term support, including help with employment and moves to permanent housing, and referrals from agencies and veterans themselves are accepted.

Telephone: **0131 556 0091**

Website: **www.svronline.org**

Email: **info@svronline.org**

Cobseo Housing Cluster Directory

Cobseo is the Confederation of Service Charities and brings together its members to cooperate and collaborate with others in order to provide the best possible level of support to beneficiaries. The Cobseo Housing Cluster is made up of a wide range of charitable and social housing organisations that provide veteran-specific accommodation.

The members of the Cluster work to provide accommodation for the ex-Service community and bring about an integrated veterans' housing sector with clear pathways for ex-Service personnel in housing need to move into permanent homes. The Cluster also maintains a regularly updated directory of dedicated services for veterans.

The directory provides an index by geographical location that can be used to find support and accommodation in a given local area.

Access the directory and find out more about the cluster's work on their website: **www.cobseo.org.uk/clusters/housing**

No Homeless Veterans is a new campaign led by the Cobseo Housing Cluster to ensure that veterans are identified as ex- Armed Forces at their point of need and are quickly and effectively signposted to the enhanced support services available to them.

The campaign has a dedicated website: **www.nohomelessveterans.org.uk**



Conclusions

Suggested actions to take

- Identify veterans as early as possible in the course of providing support. Be sure to “ask the question” and explain to the client that it is being asked in order to direct them to the best support available.
- Verify an applicant’s past Service, if necessary, by contacting Veterans UK.
- Build partnerships with other local authorities, housing providers and Armed Forces charities in the area and design locally specialised advice and information to give to clients that have been identified as coming from the Armed Forces community.
- Direct clients to nationwide specialists like the Armed Services Advice Project and Armed Forces charities, particularly those with a focus on housing, for additional support when the choice of available support is confusing.
- Review housing allocations policies regularly and consult with Armed Forces charities to implement the best possible service to members of our Armed Forces community.
- Understand that current serving personnel may have been given as much as six months notice to move out of their Service provided accommodation. Be prepared to accept that notice as proof of being threatened with homelessness, and be sure to ask applicants to provide the documentation to council staff.
- Provide specialised Armed Forces and veterans training and information resources to local authority and housing association staff in order for them to have insight into what life as a serving or veteran member of the Armed Forces.
- Local Authorities should consider and implement the specific recommendations made to them by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner in the 2015 “Report on Provision of Information on Housing for Service Leavers and Veterans in Scotland”.
- Receive a briefing from the No Homeless Veterans campaign, provided by the Cobseo Housing Cluster.



Further reading & bibliography

Useful Housing Guides for Veterans

The following guides have been published in Scotland to help veterans understand the services and support available to them in terms of housing. It may be worth your staff familiarising themselves with the guides, and signposting veterans to them.

Housing Options Guidance

This Guidance has been published by the Scottish Government and COSLA in order to support the development of Housing Options approaches in Scotland's local authorities.

www.gov.scot/publications/housing-options-guidance

A Scottish Housing Guide for people leaving the Armed Forces and ex – Service personnel

The Scottish Government, in conjunction with Veterans Scotland, have published a guide for those leaving the Armed Forces

www.veteransscotland.co.uk/pillars/housing

Military Matters: Finding a Home when you leave the Armed Forces in Scotland

Housing Options Scotland has produced a Military Matters Guide to assist those leaving the Armed Forces with future housing options available to them.

www.housingoptionsscotland.org.uk/projects-introduction/military-matters

- Armed Forces Covenant Local Authority Guides and E- Learning modules, www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/localauthorities
- Forces in Mind Trust, 2013, “*The Transition Mapping Study*,” www.fim-trust.org/news/transition-mapping-study-report
- *Housing (Scotland) Act 2010*
- *Housing (Scotland) Act 2014*
- Housing Options Scotland, 2017, “*Military Matters: Finding A HomeWhenYou Leave The Armed Forces in Scotland*”
- Joint Service Housing Advice Office, www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao
- Ministry of Defence, 2018, “*The Strategy for our Veterans*”
- Poppyscotland and The Royal British Legion’s Household Survey, 2014
- Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services (SPACES), www.riverside.org.uk/care-and-support/veterans/spaces
- Scottish Executive, 2005, “*Code of Guidance on Homelessness*”
- Scottish Government, 2014, “*Our Commitments: Scottish Government Support for the Armed Forces Community*”
- Scottish Government and COSLA, 2016, “*Housing Options Guidance*”
- Scottish Government, 2016, “*Renewing Our Commitments: Scottish Government Support for the Armed Forces Community*”
- Scottish Government, 2019, “*Practice Guidance for Social Housing Allocations*”
- Scottish Veterans Commissioner, 2015, “*Report on the provision of information on Housing for Service Leavers and Veterans in Scotland*”
- Scottish Veterans Commissioner, 2019, “*SVC Progress Report – Approach and Findings*”
- University of York, 2014, “*Meeting the housing and support needs of single veterans in Great Britain*”
- Veterans Scotland, 2018, “*A Scottish Guide for people leaving the Armed Forces and ex-Service personnel*”
- Veterans UK, www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk

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