

Homeless ex-armed forces

You may be entitled to extra help if you become homeless and are leaving the armed services, or you are a former member.

Practical steps to take:

- Register for the housing allocation scheme <http://www.home-link.gov.uk>
- Get help with housing or apply as homeless before you're discharged
- Find out what help you are entitled to from healthcare and housing to employability, finances, personal relationships and more, visit <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/>

Your rights if you have served in the forces

You may qualify for help if you are a former member of the armed forces and are homeless or threatened with homelessness. In addition you will have to prove to that you are eligible for housing assistance, and have not made yourself intentionally homeless.

Subject to you satisfying the above criteria we have to help you with both emergency and longer-term accommodation if it is accepted that you are homeless and in priority need with regard to needing accommodation. We will explain what this means to you.

The council must consider if it can help you using both general rules that apply to everyone and special rules that apply to people who were in the forces.

General rules for people in priority need

It can be easier to get help if you qualify under the general rules for people in priority need, for example if you have dependent children or are pregnant. We will also look to see if you are vulnerable in some way. This may involve showing how a disability, mental health problem, addiction or other issue affects your ability to secure housing for yourself compared with other people who are homeless.

Extra homelessness rules for the armed forces

You should also be treated as being vulnerable and therefore in priority need for accommodation if you can show that your vulnerability is as a result of being a former member of the armed forces.

When deciding this, we may consider:

- how long you were in the forces
- if you spent any time in a military hospital
- if you were released from service on medical grounds (and have a Medical History Release Form)

- if you have had accommodation since leaving service and if you have been able to obtain or maintain accommodation since you left
- how long it has been since you left service.

To help support your case, you may need to provide medical evidence from the MOD, including a Medical History Release Form (if you were given one). You may need to seek independent legal advice or help from a specialist agency to make representations on your behalf if we decide that you do not meet the criteria set out above, and therefore we do not owe a duty to you to provide you with accommodation.

Re-housing options

To be accepted as homeless in the local council area where you were based, you must be able to show that you have a local connection with the local council where your base was situated.

You may be able to show a local connection with that area if you:

- currently work in the area
- have lived in the area for six out of the last 12 months or three out of the last five years
- live with a partner who currently works in the area.

If you have left the forces and are not yet working for another employer in the area, you won't be able to show a local connection through working in the area. However, you may still be able to show that you have a local connection as the time you spent living or working in the area may still count.

You should also consider if you are able to show a local connection with this or another local council area where you have close family connections.

Additional priority will be awarded on Home-Link (the housing register) to the following categories of people:

- a. former members of the Armed Forces
- b. serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
- c. bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
- d. serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.

Applying as homeless before discharge from the forces

Contact West Suffolk's Housing Options Team if you think you will be homeless after discharge from the services. We will not wait until you are made homeless before we help you.

Upon the production of a letter of discharge or some other evidence that confirms the date of your discharge from the forces, we will accept that from the date of discharge you will become homeless. In the event that you have not sought any

housing assistance from this council prior to your discharge from the Forces you may need to stay in your accommodation as long as possible and wait for Defence Estates to evict you.

Defence Estates have to give you a Notice to Vacate before they can take you to court in order that they can obtain a possession order. You can use any Notice to Vacate and any possession order that is obtained against you as evidence in support of your homelessness application.

Current members of the Armed Forces may also request additional priority be applied to their housing application six months prior to the date when they are due to leave military service. Appropriate evidence of the end to military service will be required.

Ex-forces and single, homeless and on the streets

Some single homeless people don't qualify for help from the council. There is a range of services in Suffolk available for people who find themselves homeless and on the streets, for example:

- The Bury Drop In is a useful source of practical support – they provide a warm place to stay on a Tuesday and Friday between 11am and 2pm. They can also help with food, clothing, and shower facilities.
- the Royal British Legion might be able to help with a rent deposit contact www.support.britishlegion.org.uk
- SSAFA provide housing advice to people currently serving in the forces and ex-services personnel and their families. SSAFA can be contacted through www.ssafa.org.uk

Use the Homeless England directory to find details of other day centres and hostels across the UK. This can be located at www.homeless.org.uk

Homeless after dishonourable discharge

The council may not have a duty to help you if you are homeless after being discharged on disciplinary grounds from the UK armed forces.

Further help

Please contact the Housing Options Team on 01284 763233

Last updated 12 March 2019