

Ending Veterans' Homelessness

A CALL TO ACTION

The need for change

Too many Servicemen and women transitioning from the Armed Forces are still falling into homelessness after they leave the Forces - especially younger people and Early Service Leavers. Evidence suggests that as many as 3% of those accessing homelessness services in England are Veterans which means that each year, well over a thousand ex-Service personnel require urgent support to find accommodation. Many more experience crises in their lives which requires urgent intervention to prevent homelessness and wider social issues. It is critical that the minority of Veterans facing homelessness - or those supporting them - know where to turn to at the right time. We believe that we can reduce the incidence of homelessness among Veterans close to zero - but this will only happen with a significant shift in approach to the issue of housing ex-Service personnel.



Our recommendations to end homelessness within the Veterans' community

New research from the University of York, funded by the Forces in Mind Trust and commissioned by Stoll and Riverside, has identified the obstacles Veterans face when seeking accommodation post service.¹ Stoll and Riverside, in collaboration with the Cobseo Housing Cluster, are now calling for the Government, Local Authorities and other agencies to adopt the recommendations below as part of a drive to reduce Veterans' homelessness to zero.

These recommendations fall under three key areas:

- 1. We must alter the transition process to try and prevent any Serving personnel becoming homeless after Service.**
 - We recognise that the majority of Service personnel will undergo a successful transition. However we call upon the Ministry of Defence to ensure that every single Service leaver, whatever their circumstances, is asked about their housing options after Service. Those identified of being at risk of homelessness should be given bespoke and well-informed advice to ensure they have a pathway away from homelessness upon leaving the Services. This would ensure the Ministry of Defence fulfils its own responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant. To this end we recommend that Service Directive 3221 is applied consistently so that every Service Leaver, whatever their circumstances, is asked about housing as part of the transition process. We also call for this to be a key commitment in the forthcoming Veterans' Strategy.
 - To achieve this, we are calling for the concept of the **Housing Transition Partnership** to be introduced which will promote a greater urgency around the issue of potential homelessness after Service. This Partnership is not a whole new infrastructure to be set up as part of the transition process, but a simple co-ordination of existing resources to ensure that every single Serviceman and woman transitioning out of the Armed Forces is given the opportunity to consider their housing options and those that do not have a clear pathway to a home are channelled through to the appropriate support to obtain one. This should be applied to Service Leavers in all manner of circumstances, including Early Service Leavers, those leaving during Basic Training and those leaving from the Military Corrective Training Centre.

¹ Accommodation for Single Veterans: Developing Housing and Support Pathways (Quilgars et al., 2018)

2. All Local Authorities and other agencies in the 'civilian' sphere must establish if a person seeking housing support is a Veteran and then have a clear plan to respond to the Veterans they identify.

- We are asking for Local Authority Housing Departments to ensure that Veterans are featured within their housing and homelessness strategies. This means not only recording whether someone applying for housing advice is a Veteran, but also being able to give the appropriate advice so the Veteran has a clear housing pathway. The statutory guidance issued to Local Authorities on housing allocations in 2012 specifically emphasises the flexibilities authorities have to prioritise applications from ex-service personnel². We believe that this guidance needs to be applied consistently to ensure that every Local Authority identifies Veterans and can advise them appropriately.
- We call on The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure that the H-CLIC form which records homelessness data from Local Authorities asks for data on Veterans. This would mean that every Local Authority proactively identifies Veterans coming through their doors.
- We call on the Ministry of Defence, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and umbrella bodies within the Veterans, housing and homelessness spheres to endorse the Veterans' Housing Advice capability within the Veterans' Gateway³. We ask these bodies to promote the Veterans' Gateway to their members (and those it supports strategically) to ensure that every service that interacts with a homeless Veteran can ensure they obtain bespoke and well-informed advice through one phone call.

3. Supported housing for Veterans should be put on a sustainable financial footing once and for all.

- As part of its review of funding for supported housing⁴, the Government should ensure that Veterans living in short-term accommodation continue to have their housing costs met through the benefits system - as opposed to the localised system currently being proposed.
- Veterans are the only supported housing sector in the UK where the majority of support costs are paid for by the charities themselves. This is not sustainable and threatens to undermine our country's ability to support homeless Veterans. Given the unusual nature of demand, which is often associated with Veterans who originate from outside the area where they are seeking accommodation, revenue costs for support services should be funded nationally, through a fund established by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- If funding continues to be allocated locally, clear planning should be put in place by Local Authorities within the framework set out in the proposed National Statement of Expectation (for supported housing). This framework should specifically require Local Authorities to consider the needs of Veterans as they map demand and create supported housing strategies.

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5918/2171391.pdf

³ <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/funding-for-supported-housing>

A commitment from the Veterans' sector

For its part, the Veterans' housing sector is committed to ensuring that its provision is aligned to the needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness as far as possible. To this end, through the Cobseo Housing Cluster, it has already:

- Set up a national housing advice line available to every single Veteran in housing need - from the day they are given their discharge date and for the rest of their life..
- Set up a national 'voids noticeboard' so that any vacancy within the Veterans' housing sector is available to any Veteran in need at any given time.
- Pioneered the concept of a Veterans' Pathway by linking temporary accommodation solutions with permanent accommodation to give more Veterans a clear pathway out of homelessness.



Take action

We invite you to endorse this Call to Action and be part of a national drive to help eradicate unnecessary homelessness among Veterans. Please email your support to:

calltoaction@stoll.org.uk or veterans@riverside.org.uk

For further information about ending homelessness among Veterans and to download brand new research from the University of York, please visit one of the websites below.

www.fim-trust.org/ www.riverside.org.uk/veteransresearch www.stoll.org.uk/research

#NoHomelessVeterans

