

Homeless ex-armed forces advice

If you're leaving the armed forces, or you are a former member, you may be entitled to extra help if you become homeless. There are special considerations for certain serving and former members of the regular armed forces. This means that you may qualify for additional priority on Home Choice Plus. This is in line with the Armed Forces Community Covenant and the full detail is listed within the Home Choice Plus Allocation Scheme: <https://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk/>

Key advice

- Check the Home Choice Plus Allocation scheme
- Get help with housing or apply as homeless before you're discharged by contacting the Housing Advice Team on 01789 260861 or housingadviceteam@stratford-dc.gov.uk.

Homelessness rights for ex-forces

You may qualify for help from the Council if you are a former member of the armed forces and are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. If you are eligible and you normally reside in the UK, the Council is likely to have a **duty to assist you to prevent your homelessness** if you are homeless within 56 days or a **duty to assist you to relieve your homelessness** if you are actually homeless, but it may not be obliged to provide you with temporary accommodation. If the Council accepts a duty to either prevent or relieve your homelessness you will be invited to complete a **Personalised Housing Plan** with a housing professional. This will outline the steps that both you and the Council will take to help resolve your situation. For the Council to be legally obliged to provide you with temporary accommodation it will have to be satisfied that there is **reason to believe you have a priority need**. You may have a priority need if your household includes dependent children or someone reasonably expected to reside with you is pregnant. As a single person you will only have a priority need if you are considered vulnerable.

When considering whether you have a priority need the Council will look at whether you are vulnerable as a result of:

- Having a mental illness
- Having a learning disability or physical disability
- Being under 21 and having been in care
- Having been in the armed forces
- Having fled violence or threats of violence.
- Having served a custodial sentence

Extra homelessness rules for the armed forces

As stated as ex armed forces personnel you should 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, the Council may consider:

- how long you were in the forces and what role you had
- 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). It can be hard to establish that you are vulnerable.

You may need to seek independent legal advice or help from a specialist agency to make representations on your behalf if this Council decides that you do not meet the criteria set out above, and therefore it does not owe a duty to you to provide you with accommodation.

Re-housing in the area of your base

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.

You don't need to have a local connection to apply to join the Council's Home Choice Plus register if you are serving in the armed forces or left in the last 5 years.

Applying as homeless before discharge from the forces

Contact the Council's Housing Advice Team if you think you will be homeless after discharge from the forces. The Council should not wait until you are made homeless before it helps you, as if you are eligible it will have a duty to assist you to prevent homelessness. Upon the production of a letter of discharge or some other evidence that confirms the date of your discharge from the Forces, the District Council should accept that from the date of discharge you will become homeless and start to work with you to prevent you from becoming 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.

Useful support services for homeless people

Stratford Link project- Stratford Link Project runs on week day mornings 10am-1pm.

This service is a free drop-in centre where rough sleepers and vulnerable people who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness can get a hot drink, a snack and link in with support services. There are also shower, bathing and clothes washing facilities available.

The link is located at 14 Waterside, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6BA.

Stratford food bank

<https://stratforduponavon.foodbank.org.uk/>

You can obtain a food bank voucher by contacting Stratford-on-Avon District Council Housing Advice team.

For information on housing related support and accommodation based services within Warwickshire contact the Housing Advice Team on the number below and see Warwickshire County Council Website: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/hrs>

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

Useful local and national support services for homeless ex forces

The Royal British Legion provides support and has a local branch
<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/>

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

Veterans' Gateway

Veterans Gateway 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:
<https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/>

Homeless after dishonourable discharge

Stratford on Avon District Council may not have a duty to help you if you are homeless after being discharged on disciplinary grounds from the UK armed forces.

Stratford on Avon Housing Advice Team

The Council's Housing Advice Team can help you with either finding or keeping a

safe and suitable home for you and your family. We have a team of housing advisors and homeless prevention coordinators who will work with you to explore all of your options.

Housing Advice Team

Elizabeth House
Church Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6HX

Phone: 01789 260861

Out of hours phone: 01789 267575

Email: housingadviceteam@stratford-dc.gov.uk