

Advice for Armed Forces Veterans

This factsheet is for British Armed Forces veterans, who need housing advice in Kent.

Veterans' Housing Advice

Veterans' Housing Advice is a national telephone helpline, which is open 7 days a week, from 8 a.m to 8 p.m, on **0808 801 0880**. The helpline makes it easier for forces veterans to get the help of specialist organisations. They can help you with:

- Finding temporary accommodation with support;
- Finding settled accommodation, with or without support;
- Targeted help if you are unable to buy or rent property on the open market;
- 'Floating support' – to help you keep settled accommodation that you might otherwise be at risk of losing.

Some other options

If you are single you can get help from **The Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services (SPACES)**. Telephone 01748 833797 / 872940 / 830191, or email spaces@echg.org.uk. Their website is www.spaces.org.uk.

Veterans Aid provide direct support for single ex-service personnel to secure hostel and shared accommodation. The helpline is 0800 012 68 67, or email: info@veterans-aid.net. The website is www.veterans-aid.net.

Haig Housing own over 1,500 properties for ex-services personnel across 50 locations in the UK. Telephone 020 8685 5 777 or visit their website: <http://www.haighousing.org.uk/>.

The **Royal British Legion (RBLI)** also provides accommodation options and in Kent we have the RBLI village in Aylesford, near Maidstone. Their helpline is 01622 795900, or email enquiries@rbli.co.uk.

If you are a disabled veteran, contact **The Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation** on 0207 385 2110, or **The RBLI** on 0808 802 8080.

Affordable home ownership

The **Help to Buy scheme** was created by Government to help working people get on the Housing ladder. To find out more visit www.helptobuy.gov.uk or the local scheme provider BPHA, at <http://www.bpha.org.uk> or call 0333 321 4044.

Getting on the housing register

Each local council in Kent has a register of people who wish to get into social and council housing. The councils will decide who gets offered housing based on a points or banding system. You can apply to one of the council's registers via Kent Homechoice on the website at <https://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk/>.

Applicants need to be eligible and have a connection to one of the local councils listed overleaf – but there are special arrangements for those who are or have been services personnel. The council will consider you have a connection if you are a serving member of the armed forces or have been discharged from the forces within the last

5 years. You will also qualify if you are a bereaved spouse leaving services family accommodation or are a former or serving member of the reserve forces, who needs to move because of injury or illness sustained as a result of service.

Most housing authorities also award extra priority to former and current members of the armed forces (including members of their household) who are imminently due to be discharged from the services and need housing urgently. There would be an exception if the discharge was dishonourable.

Many councils take your income and savings into account, when deciding who should get priority. However, compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service will normally be disregarded. Ask the council that you are applying to what their policy is.

Homeless or threatened with homelessness?

If you think you will be made homeless in the next 56 days, and you cannot find your own alternative accommodation, you can approach any local authority in England, and ask for assistance. The council will assess your needs and draw up a 'Personalised Housing Plan' to help you resolve your housing problem. This plan will include the steps that you and the council will take to find a solution. The council you apply to may have a number of specific schemes that may be appropriate for you. For example, most councils provide loans for rent deposits or rent in advance – so that you can meet the upfront costs of private renting.

If you are living in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence and will lose this upon discharge, please ensure you obtain a **Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Living Accommodation**, which will show when your entitlement to service quarters will end. If you are within 56 days of the accommodation ending the council will consider you to be threatened with homelessness and start working with you straight away.

If you are already homeless and there is reason to believe you are in a priority need group, the council will provide you with temporary accommodation. When assessing if you are in priority need, the council will consider whether you are vulnerable, and will take into account your experiences in the forces and the effect they have had on you. 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).

Whether you are in priority need or not, the council will try and relieve your homelessness for a period of 56 days. If you are unable to find a home during this 'relief period', and you are in priority need (and have co-operated with the plan), you may be owed a 'full housing duty' by the council you applied to and may receive an offer of housing.

Contacting your local Council

Ashford: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk>
Canterbury: <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk>
Dartford: <https://www.dartford.gov.uk>
Dover: <https://www.dover.gov.uk>
Gravesham: <http://www.gravesham.gov.uk>
Maidstone: <https://self.maidstone.gov.uk>
Medway: <https://www.medway.gov.uk>
Sevenoaks: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk>
Folkestone & Hythe: <https://www.shepway.gov.uk>
Swale: <https://www.swale.gov.uk>
Thanet: <https://www.thanet.gov.uk>
Tunbridge Wells: <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk>
Tonbridge & Malling: <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk>