Exeter City Council

ADVICE GUIDE

Advice for ex-forces personnel and their families

There is a range of information and services available to Service leavers and veterans to assist them with accessing and maintaining suitable accommodation both on discharge and later in life.

Advice and information

The principal responsibility for providing housing information and advice to Service Personnel lies with the armed forces up to the point of discharge. These services are delivered through the Joint Service Housing Advice Office and through Veterans UK.

Applying as homeless before discharge from the forces

Contact the Council's Housing Solutions service if you think you will be homeless after discharge from the services. The Council will not wait until you are made homeless before it helps you.

Upon the production of a letter of discharge or some other evidence that confirms the date of your discharge from the Forces. The Council will accept that from the date of discharge you will become homeless.

What to do if you are homeless or threatened with homelessness?

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness then is important to seek advice at the earliest opportunity. The sooner you contact us before becoming homeless the more options we will have to assist you.

If you have been asked to leave service accommodation then please bring a copy of the MOD Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Accommodation. The certificate will indicate the date on which entitlement to occupy service accommodation ends.

Exeter City Council's Housing Solutions Service
Tel: 01392 265726
Email: Housing.advice@exeter.gov.uk
Address: Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter EX1 1JN

If you are homeless outside of normal office hours (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm) or at the weekend then please contact Exeter City Council's Out Of Hours Number:-
01392 265147 for assistance

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Providing Temporary Accommodation

If you are homeless and have nowhere to live and are in 'Priority Need', then Exeter City Council may have a duty to provide you with Temporary Accommodation whilst we assess your application and help you to secure more settled accommodation. For further guidance on accommodation duties see Chapter 15. Section 193(2) of the 1996 Act requires housing authorities to secure accommodation for applicants who have a priority need for accommodation.

A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular armed forces (a veteran) has a priority need for accommodation. Veterans include a person who was previously a member of the regular navy, military or air forces.

In considering whether veterans are vulnerable as a result of their time spent in the forces, a housing authority may wish to take into account the following factors:

(a) the length of time the applicant spent in the armed forces (although authorities should not assume that vulnerability could not occur as a result of a short period of service);

(b) the type of service the applicant was engaged in (those on active service may find it more difficult to cope with civilian life);

(c) whether the applicant spent any time in a military hospital (this could be an indicator of a serious health problem or of post-traumatic stress);

(d) whether HM Forces' medical and welfare advisers have judged an individual to be particularly vulnerable in their view and have issued a Medical History Release Form giving a summary of the circumstances causing that vulnerability;

(e) the length of time since the applicant left the armed forces, and whether they have been able to obtain and/or maintain accommodation during that time; and,

(f) whether the applicant has any existing support networks, particularly by way of family or friends.

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What is a local connection?

A person has a local connection with the district of a housing authority if they have a connection with it because:

(a) they are, or were in the past, normally resident there, and that residence was of their own choice; or,

(b) they are employed there; or,

(c) they have family associations living there; or,

(d) of any special circumstances.

Former members of the armed forces can establish a local connection through residence or employment in the same way as a civilian.

There are 8 local Authority Districts that make up 'New Devon'. These are:-

- **East Devon District Council**
- **Exeter City Council**
- **Mid Devon District Council**
- **North Devon District Council**
- **South Hams District Council**
- **Teignbridge District Council**
- **Torridge District Council**
- **West Devon Borough Council**

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

Ex-forces and single, homeless and on the streets

There is a range of services for people who find themselves homeless and on the streets, for example:

- day centres are a useful source of practical support – they provide a warm place to stay during the day and food, clothing, laundry facilities and showers.
- the Royal British Legion might be able to help with a rent deposit
- 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 in across the UK. This can be located at www.homeless.org.uk

Further housing support and advice by Veterans' Gateway

Veterans' Gateway is a service which provides clear pathways for ex-Service personnel in housing need throughout the United Kingdom to move into permanent homes it is also the first point of contact for veterans seeking support.

Veterans' Gateway made up of a consortium of organisations and Armed Forces charities, including The Royal British Legion, SSAFA – the Armed Forces Charity, Poppyscotland, Combat Stress and Connect Assist. Its main aim is to make accessing the services of charities easier and a team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to put you in touch with the help you need, or direct you to the information you are looking for.

The Veterans' Gateway also provides a Self Help service to find information for yourself. This includes advice from a range of organisations covering issues from employment, finances and housing, to independent living, mental wellbeing, physical health, and families and communities.

Veterans' Gateway Support

Tel: 0808 802 1212

Lines open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Text: 81212

Provide your details by text message and an advisor will be in touch

Devon Home Choice

How to Apply

All Council Housing and Registered Social Landlords Properties are advertised through Devon Home Choice. Devon Home Choice is a way of looking for council and housing association homes.

Under Devon Home Choice you can:

- Choose which homes interest you
- Move within Devon

Anyone over 16 years old can register with Devon Home Choice, except for:

- Certain people from abroad with limited rights to remain in the United Kingdom. For more information please contact the local housing team in the area of Devon you would like to live.
- People who are not subject to immigration control and have a right of admission to the UK but have not been habitually resident in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland (the Common Travel Area). For more information please contact the local housing team in the area of Devon you would like to live.
- People assessed by Devon local authorities as being guilty of unacceptable behaviour. For example, significant rent arrears or anti-social behaviour. For more information please see the Devon Home Choice policy on the Useful Information page or contact the local housing team in the area of Devon you would like to live

How to register with Devon Home Choice

The easiest way to register with Devon Home Choice is by completing the online application form.

It should take about 30 minutes to complete the online form. Please ensure that you make a note of your unique login reference number, password and memorable date.

Your application will be saved each time you complete a Section and click 'Next Section' or 'Previous Section'. You can return to a part-completed application by clicking 'Log In/My Account' and entering your reference number, memorable date and password.

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Please note that you may be asked to provide further information once your online application form has been assessed.

Your online application must be completed within 28 days of initial registration. Any incomplete application forms will be cancelled after this time.

If you are not able to apply online please contact the local housing team in the area of Devon you would like to live.

For your application to be processed and accepted you need to:

- Complete the application form fully, ensuring you answer all of the mandatory questions. These are marked with an *
- Provide any extra information requested on the application form or by the local housing team in the area of Devon where you would like to live once they have received your application

Please contact the local housing team in the area of Devon you would like to live if you:

- Have any questions about the application form
- Would like help filling the form in
- Need the form in another language, in large print, on audio tape or in other formats
- Require further support, such as translation services to help with your application

Please note that it is a criminal offence to either make a false statement, or to deliberately withhold information in order to seek housing through Devon Home Choice.

We aim to provide confirmation of your Devon Home Choice application within 20 working days of you providing all of the required information.

When your application to the Devon Home Choice is accepted we will write to you to confirm:

- What band your application has been placed in, and the reason for this
- Your band start date
- The size of home that you are eligible to bid for
- Whether you need a certain type, or an adapted, home because of your mobility needs
- Whether you need older persons housing

You must tell us if there are any changes in your circumstances. Any change may affect your housing need and the priority your application should be awarded. We will then reassess your application. If necessary we will change your band and band start date.

Failure to notify us of any changes in your circumstances could lead to you not being made an offer even if your bid is successful.

Members of the Armed and Reserve Forces

The following is taken from **section 3.10** of Devon Home Choice Policy

The local connection provision will not apply to members of the armed forces and some former service personnel etc. **Therefore if you have been discharged from the Armed Forces within the last 5 years, you will not need a Local Connection to Devon in order to apply to register with Devon home Choice.**

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 came into force in November 2012, requiring local authorities to provide additional preference to households who fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories (see above) and who have urgent housing needs, where the applicant or a resident member of their household who might reasonably be expected to reside with them satisfies one of the following categories:

> (i) s/he is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service,
> (ii) s/he formerly served in the regular forces,
> (iii) s/he has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
> (iv) s/he is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service.

The Devon local authorities have agreed to apply this new legislation by placing the application of the types of person set out above in Band C, where they would otherwise have been placed in Band D. This ensures that such applicants are provided with additional preference over those applicants in Band D, who are provided with reasonable preference only.

Local authorities will not take into account any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service into account when assessing whether they have sufficient resources to meet their own housing need.

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Other useful contacts

- SSAFA – **Tel:** 0800 731 4880
- Royal British Legion – Tel: 0808 802 8080
- Shelter – 0808 1644 660
- Combat Stress – 0800 138 1619
- Connect Assist – 01443 827 600

Advice and Information drop in clinics

British Legion - Exeter

Co-Lab, King William Street, Exeter, EX4 6PD

1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month 10 am – 12 pm

Exeter's Armed Forces One Stop Shop

A friendly social morning for service personnel, veterans and families of the Armed Forces community.

A friendly advice and information service will also available from the following organisations;

The Royal British Legion
The Warrior Programme
RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity
Help 4 Heroes

4th Tuesday every month between 10am - 1pm

The Royal British Legion Club, Legion Way, Alphington, EX2 8TF