



Homeless ex-armed forces advice

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

Key advice

- Check the housing allocation scheme which is Cumbria Choice
www.cumbriachoice.org.uk
- Get help with housing or apply as homeless before you're discharged

Homelessness rights for ex-forces

You may qualify for help from the Housing Options Service at Cumberland Council 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 the Options Team that you are eligible for housing assistance, and have not made yourself intentionally homeless.

Subject to you satisfying the above criteria the Council has 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.

Cumberland 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.

Copeland should 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 rendered 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, Cumberland 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 will not establish a local connection with an area by virtue of serving, or having served, there while in the forces

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 go on Cumbria Choice housing register.

Applying as homeless before discharge from the forces

Contact Cumberland's Housing Options Service if you think you will be homeless after discharge from the services. The Housing Options Service should 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, Cumberland should 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.

Ex-forces and single, homeless and on the streets

Many single homeless people don't qualify for help from Cumberland or any other local authority. There is a range of services for people who find themselves homeless:

Home Group Ex Services / Veteran Accommodation in Cumbria who have accommodation across Cumbria – www.cmves.org.uk Tel: 01772 894039

SPACES can help you find permanent / temporary accommodation, or they can refer you to the Beacon in Catterick, North Yorkshire – Telephone : 0345 111 0000 or spaces@riverside.org.uk or visit www.spaces.org.uk

Royal British Legion at 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/cumbria

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

Further housing support and advice by Veterans' Housing Advice

Veterans' Housing Advice is a new service which provides clear pathways for ex-Service personnel in housing need throughout the United Kingdom to move into permanent homes.

It is provided in partnership with The Royal British Legion, Shelter and Connect Assist, its main aim is to make accessing the services of charities easier through a telephone helpline open seven days a week from 8am-8pm.

There is now a Veterans Housing Advice (VHA) web site www.veteranshousingadvice.org.uk and the direct number to an advisor is 0808 801 0880, that can also be accessed via the Veterans' Gateway on 0808 802 1212 that is available 24/7.

Services provided by members of the CHC include:

- Supported Accommodation - providing temporary accommodation for veterans, with support.
- Long Term Housing - providing settled accommodation for veterans, with or without support.
- General Needs - Unsupported housing for members of the ex-Service community unable to buy or rent on the open market. Tenants will usually be self-sufficient, but may need to avail themselves of some of the floating support listed. Some adapted properties may be available or adaptations arranged as necessary.
- Floating Support - Services delivered by visiting workers to people in their own homes to help people maintain their settled accommodation. • Outreach Services - Covering work with rough sleepers or people in temporary accommodation to help them access more settled accommodation and any support needs. • Day Centres - The provision of activities and support to homeless and vulnerably housed people. (Also called by some providers 'drop-in' facilities)

Homeless after dishonourable discharge

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

Joining the Housing Register

Applicants that satisfy the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012. These are:

- Applicants who are serving members of the regular armed forces

- Applicants who served in the regular armed forces within the 5 years immediately prior to the date of their application
- Applicants who are serving or former serving members of the regular armed forces or reserve forces who suffer from a serious injury, illness or disability sustained as a result of their service
- Applicants who are a bereaved spouse/civil partner of a former serving member of the regular armed forces and have recently ceased (or will soon cease) to be entitled to reside in services accommodation following the death of their spouse/civil partner.

The following categories of applicants will be afforded a priority status for accommodation on Cumbria Choice if they have left the Armed Forces within the last 5 years:

Applicants with urgent housing who:
a. Are serving (and will soon leave) the regular forces and is suffering from serious injury, illness, mental ill health, or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service
b. Have recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the MOD 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
c. Are serving or have served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the persons service

Contact us

If you prefer to speak to an officer in the Housing Options Service at Cumberland Council regarding your situation, please contact us on 0300 373 3730.