

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Housing Advice and Assistance for Members of the Armed Forces

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

■ Ward(s) affected: ALL

■ Report authors:

Caroline Carpendale – Head of Service, ext. 37-1701

Chris Burgin – Director of Housing, ext. 37-5143

■ Report version number: V1

1. Summary

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny members of Leicester City Council's approach in the provision of housing and advice and assistance to Armed Forces personnel.
- 1.2 The report sets out the guidance for local authorities in the allocation of accommodation for this group and the local approach to assisting those who are leaving the Armed Forces and returning to civilian life.

2. Government Guidance

- 2.1 The following provisions recognise the special position of members of the Armed Forces (and their families) who are leaving their employment and returning to civilian life.
- 2.2 The regulations are subject to parliamentary scrutiny and regulate to ensure that authorities do not disqualify the following applicants on the grounds that they do not have a local connection with the authority's district. This includes:
 - Members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
 - Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
 - Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.
- 2.3 Local Authorities are also required to frame their allocation scheme to give reasonable preference to the following categories who have urgent housing needs:
 - Former members of the Armed Forces
 - Serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
 - Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
 - serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
- 2.4 Authorities are also strongly encouraged to take into account the needs of all serving or former Service personnel when framing their allocation schemes, and to give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or

former Service personnel who may themselves have been disadvantaged by the requirements of military service and, in particular, the need to move from base to base. This would be in line with terms of the Government's Armed Forces Covenant published in May 2011

- 2.5 Homelessness legislation also recognises this group and includes them as a prescriptive group when considering applications as homeless and the vulnerabilities of this group. This is pertinent to single people who may otherwise not be recognised as a specific group under this legislation.

2 Leicester City Council's Approach

- 3.1 Leicester City Council corporately gave a pledge in 2013 to contribute to the Armed Forces Community Covenant which is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. A dedicated web page has been set up on the Council's website.

- 3.2 The Housing Division have ensured that we comply with all the guidance to assist and support this group.

- 3.3 Leicester City Council's Housing Allocations Policy follows government guidance and includes the following provisions to recognise the special circumstances of this particular client group:

- The Leicester City Requirement is disregarded to give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or former Service personnel who may themselves have been disadvantaged by the requirements of military service and, in particular, the need to move from base to base, as well as those who may be leaving services due to injury who may need to move into a specific area to access specialist treatment, care and support.
- People leaving the Armed Forces who apply for housing within 5 years of their discharge and do not have a home to return to are prescriptively awarded a high band 2 priority to support and enable the individual to reintegrate and settle with minimal disruption to family life.

- 3.2 In practice advice, assistance and support is provided to members of the armed forces as soon as we are notified that the person is being discharged to manage the housing needs of the applicant to ensure as far as possible that suitable accommodation is available if required at the point of discharge or if not, as soon as possible after that.