

Cobseo Housing Cluster

Housing issues for Veterans that we believe should be a priority for the UK Government

Issue: 1	Serving Personnel Leaving the Armed Forces without a clear housing pathway and too many falling into homelessness	
Further details of issue, if required:	<p><u>The Housing Transition Partnership</u></p> <p>We recognise that the majority of Service personnel will undergo a successful transition. However we call upon the Ministry of Defence to ensure that every single Service leaver, whatever their circumstances, is asked about their housing options after Service – and the minority identified of being at risk of homelessness should be given bespoke and well-informed advice to ensure they have a pathway away from homelessness upon leaving the Services. This is in accordance with Service Directive 3221. It would also ensure that the Ministry of Defence fulfils its own responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant. This should be a key commitment in the Veterans’ Strategy.</p> <p>Most of the resources are in place to achieve this. By combining funding from the Joint Services Housing Advice Office and SPACES and ensuring that the work of these two services is combined, as well as the services offered transitioning Service personnel going through; the Defence Transition Service; Brigade Transition Teams; Brigade PRUs; other transition routes which are not through the Brigade structure (e.g. The MCTC), The Veterans Gateway and members of the Cobseo Housing Cluster; we believe we can provide a housing safety net for any individual leaving the Armed Forces.</p>	
Current assessment:	Evidence that this is an issue	<p>Cobseo Housing Cluster Call to Action FiMT Research on Veterans’ housing Ashcroft Review (Chapter 3) Forces in Mind Trust Transition Mapping Transition Outreach Evaluation Report Veterans Gateway statistics SPACES statistics JSHAO statistics</p>
	Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts	<p>This is hard to quantify across all the Cluster Members, but by way of example, SPACES for transitioning personnel has had over 12,000 referrals since its inception in 2001, 687 between April 2016 and January 2019. In that time only 22% were housed by a Local Authority, with the remaining being accommodated in either private rented or Supported Accommodation. Another example is a pilot service supporting Armed Forces personnel transitioning in London District trialled during 2017; they worked with 130 individuals identified as being at risk of an unsuccessful transition and 101 of these individuals needed access to secure accommodation.</p>
	How this issue is mostly responded to? (Signposted, offered assistance etc.) Is there data to support?	<p>There is an inconsistent approach to asking Serving personnel where they will live after leaving the Forces. This is supposed to happen through Brigades, but even in Brigades there is not consistency in identifying those in need of support to access housing once they leave</p>

		the Forces, or consistent provision of advice and support to those who do need support to source appropriate accommodation once they leave. The JSHAO does not have the resource or the skills to deliver a service and only helped 15 households access accommodation last year. There is a resettlement services linked to the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick (SPACES). The SPACES scheme is run by The Riverside Group. SPACES carry out intensive case management and actively work with and secure accommodation for service men and women prior to leaving the services or within 6 month of discharge. They also provide advice and written information to Veterans who have left the services over six months prior to the referral on who the veteran should contact to secure accommodation, as well as advice ongoing if you have used the service before. There is even a resettlement worker linked to the correctional facility at Colchester, also provided by The Riverside Group, but there is not a watertight process of identifying and supporting those leaving the forces in need of accommodation.
	Assessment of most common reason for why this is an issue?	It has not been given the same level of attention or importance as employment, where the CTP reaches 80% of all Service leavers.
Comparison to previous Financial Years:	Can you provide comparative stats? Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts of previous year	This is hard to quantify across all the Cluster Members, but by way of example, SPACES for transitioning personnel has had over 12,000 referrals since its inception. The level of referrals to SPACES has fluctuated over the last three financial years, with circa 230 in 2016/17, 260 2017/18, and 191 2018/19 YTD Jan '19. It is not possible to ascertain whether the projected decrease in the current financial year is due to a decrease in demand, or due to unintended consequence of the Veteran's Gateway being introduced. In a pilot service supporting Armed Forces personnel transitioning in London District over 2017, they worked with 130 individuals identified as being at risk of an unsuccessful transition and 101 of these individuals needed access to secure accommodation.
	Based on FY18/19 so far do you predict this will remain a top 5 issue next FY?	Yes!
Future predictions:	Based on opinion/experience, do you predict this will remain a top issue over the next 5 years?	Yes! Undoubtedly....

Issue: 2	All Local Authorities and other agencies in the 'civilian' sphere must establish if a person seeking housing support is a Veteran and then have a clear plan to respond to the Veterans they identify.
Further details of issue, if required:	We are asking for Local Authority Housing Departments to ensure that Veterans are featured within their housing and homelessness strategies. This means not only recording whether someone applying for housing advice is a Veteran, but also being able to give the appropriate advice so the Veteran has a clear housing pathway. The statutory guidance issued to Local Authorities on housing allocations in 2012 specifically emphasises the flexibilities authorities have to prioritise applications from ex-service personnel. We believe that this guidance needs to be applied consistently to ensure that every Local Authority identifies Veterans and can advise them

	<p>appropriately.</p> <p>We are delighted that The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) recently changed the H-CLIC form (which records homelessness data from Local Authorities) and now asks for data around Veterans following advocacy by the Cobseo Housing Cluster.</p> <p>We want to see this good practice of identifying Veterans and having the ability to provide them with the correct and advice and support to access accommodation quickly, be extended to charities and advice agencies. The Cobseo Housing Cluster would like to work in partnership with the MoD and MHCLG to carry out a campaign to raise awareness significantly with these groups.</p> <p>We also call on the MoD, MHCLG, Local Government Association and umbrella bodies within the Veterans, housing and homelessness spheres to endorse the Veterans Housing Advice capability within the Veterans Gateway. We ask these bodies to promote it to their members and those it supports strategically to ensure that every service that interacts with a homeless Veteran can ensure they obtain bespoke and well-informed advice through one phone call.</p>	
Current assessment:	Evidence that this is an issue	<p>Cobseo Housing Cluster Call to Action FiMT Research on Veterans' housing Ashcroft Review (Chapter 3) Armed Forces Housing Provision Veterans Gateway statistics SPACES statistics</p>
	Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts	<p>The Forces in Mind Trust research estimates that there are over 1,000 urgent cases of homelessness (i.e. nowhere to go at all) amongst the Veterans community every year and around 3,000 to 4,000 instances of homelessness experienced every year by Veterans. The enhanced housing service within the Veterans Gateway received 1,216 applications for housing advice in the last year. Stoll had 220 applications for housing from vulnerable Veterans with no access to accommodation, Haig Housing receives circa 900 applications a year for unsupported general needs housing, and SPACES in the region of 230 referrals each year. The need for brevity here prevents us listing the number of applicants to all Service housing charities but these figures are representative of the numbers across the Veterans housing sector.</p>
	How this issue is mostly responded to? (signposted, offered assistance etc.) Is there data to support?	<p>Some Local Authorities are beacons of best practice, but this is the exception. And often there is mention of Veterans in housing and homelessness strategies and good political support, but the Officers on the ground do not have the knowledge to identify and advise Veterans appropriately. Similarly many homeless charity staff are not aware of the enhanced access to services that a Veteran has. Stoll recently carried out a FOI request on Local Authorities and of the 50% that responded, over 70% of Local Authorities said they asked the question whether someone was a Veteran – but too often this did not result in correct signposting or advice on the ground.</p>

	Assessment of most common reason for why this is an issue?	There are too many points of entry for a homeless Veterans to seek support, through Local Authorities, homelessness charities, Veterans charities and advice services – hence the need to ensure greater awareness amongst all these stakeholders of the services available to Veterans and the quickest way to get the best possible advice and support to the homeless Veterans at the point of need.
Comparison to previous Financial Years:	Can you provide comparative stats? Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts of previous year	The Forces in Mind Trust research estimates that rough sleeping Veterans are in the hundreds (around 3% of London rough sleepers) and there are over 1,000 urgent cases of homelessness within the Veterans community (i.e. nowhere to go at all) and there are around 3,000 to 4,000 Veterans in urgent housing need over any given year.
	Based on FY18/19 so far do you predict this will remain a top 5 issue next FY?	Yes!
Future predictions:	Based on opinion/experience, do you predict this will remain a top issue over the next 5 years?	Yes!

Issue: 3	The need to ensure that Veterans can access suitable long-term, independent accommodation	
Further details of issue, if required:	<p>The biggest reason that Veterans are becoming homeless in the UK at this time is because there are not enough houses to go around; in the game of musical chairs, Veterans can miss out as much as anyone. It also means that vacancies are not becoming available in hostels and short-term accommodation because those ready and willing to move on to longer-term accommodation are unable to source an appropriate place to move into. We would like the Veterans Strategy to explore ways to increase the supply of tenancies for Veterans, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asking Local Authorities to identify how Veterans can access long-term, suitable tenancies as part of their wider obligations to consider Veterans in their housing and homelessness strategies. 2. To lobby Housing Associations and the National Housing Federation to open up more vacancies for Veterans. 3. To endorse the Veterans' Nomination Scheme as an effective conduit for Veterans to access independent accommodation and urge/compel Local Authorities and Housing Associations to identify tenancies they can ringfence for Veterans to be let through the Veterans Nomination Scheme. 	
Current assessment:	Evidence that this is an issue	Cobseo Housing Cluster Call to Action FiMT Research on Veterans' housing Armed Forces Housing Provision Veterans Gateway statistics SPACES statistics
	Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts	Ultimately this is about the need for homes for Veterans. The Forces in Mind Trust research estimates that there are over 1,000 urgent cases of homelessness (i.e. nowhere to go at all) amongst the Veterans community every year and around 3,000 to 4,000 instances of homelessness experiences every year by Veterans.

		<p>The enhanced housing service within the Veterans Gateway received 1,216 applications for housing advice in the last year. Stoll had 220 applications for housing from vulnerable Veterans with no access to accommodation, Haig Housing receives circa 900 applications a year for unsupported general needs housing. These are figures repeated across the Veterans housing sector.</p> <p>The DSC research identified 4,688 properties ringfenced for Veterans in the UK, but bearing in mind that there are around 3,000 to 4,000 new homeless households within the Veterans sector every year and the majority of these properties will be lived in for multiple years. Of these 4,688 properties, 1,240 were identified as family units, 1,806 are 1-bedroom properties and 1,247 are single occupancy (i.e. a room or a studio flat). We need more properties to meet demand!</p>
	How this issue is mostly responded to? (signposted, offered assistance etc.) Is there data to support?	<p>Haig Housing Trust, the largest UK wide provider of independent general needs mainly family housing for Veterans makes c new 100 tenancies every year.</p> <p>The Veterans' Nomination Scheme is a highly effective way of enabling Veterans to access independent accommodation and, working with Local Authorities and Housing Associations has opened up 451 tenancies to Veterans since 2012 that would have otherwise been let to the mainstream population. Veterans Aid which operates outside of the Housing Cluster houses around 200 homeless veterans per annum. There are other independent properties provided by many Veterans charities including SSAFA, RBLI, RAF Benevolent Fund, Blind Veterans and Care Ashore.</p>
	Assessment of most common reason for why this is an issue?	There are not enough houses in the UK full-stop, let alone in the Veterans sector. Not all housing providers or Local Authorities make any priority for Veterans.
Comparison to previous Financial Years:	Can you provide comparative stats? Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts of previous year	The above information covers multiple years.
	Based on FY18/19 so far do you predict this will remain a top 5 issue next FY?	Yes!
Future predictions:	Based on opinion/experience, do you predict this will remain a top issue over the next 5 years?	Yes!

Issue: 4	Supported housing for Veterans should be put on a sustainable financial footing once and for all.
Further details of issue, if required:	As part of its review of funding for supported housing , the Government should ensure that Veterans living in short-term accommodation continue to have their housing costs met through the benefits system - as opposed to the localised system currently being proposed. Veterans' homelessness is not a local issue and therefore funding needs to be flexible to align itself to the needs of the community.

	<p>Veterans are the only supported housing sector in the UK where the majority of support costs are paid for by the charities themselves. Organisations such as Alabaré, Launchpad, Scottish Veterans Residences and Stoll fundraise for all their revenue costs. This is not sustainable and threatens to undermine our country's ability to support homeless Veterans. Given the unusual nature of demand, which is often associated with Veterans who originate from outside the area where they are seeking accommodation, revenue costs for support services should be funded nationally, through a fund established by MHCLG.</p> <p>If funding continues to be allocated locally, clear planning should be put in place to require Local Authorities to consider the needs of Veterans as they map demand and create supported housing strategies.</p> <p>This issue also extends to outreach/tenancy sustainment services for veterans which are not funded by any statutory authority, be it local, regional or national, anywhere in the country.</p>	
Current assessment:	Evidence that this is an issue	Cobseo Housing Cluster Call to Action FiMT Research on Veterans' housing
	Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts	Over 700 responses were given to the review of funding for supported housing finished in early 2018 which shows the level of interest in this issue.
	How this issue is mostly responded to? (signposted, offered assistance etc.) Is there data to support?	Through fundraising. We do not know of any other sector where supported housing is not funded by Government – except for the Veterans sector.
	Assessment of most common reason for why this is an issue?	The main reason is that Veterans are often not a local issue because they often don't have a local a connection so are not the Local Authority's responsibility. In many Local Authorities there are not enough homeless Veterans to justify funding, but when considered on a regional basis then there are ample homeless Veterans in need to justify this funding, but Local Authorities rarely work in such a joined-up manner.
Comparison to previous Financial Years:	Can you provide comparative stats? Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts of previous year	N/A
	Based on FY18/19 so far do you predict this will remain a top 5 issue next FY?	Yes
Future predictions:	Based on opinion/experience, do you predict this will remain a top issue over the next 5 years?	Yes

Issue: 5	The availability of land to develop new properties for Veterans
Further details of issue, if required:	Land is one of the most significant barriers to developing homes in the UK and none of the major house builders are building properties specifically for Veterans. Therefore smaller providers looking to develop homes for Veterans struggle to find land. The MoD/DIO Estate is considerable and often in areas of need (i.e. Garrison areas). They also need to make best use of it (or sell it). We would like the Veterans Strategy to consider leasing or selling small parcels of land from its estate to make them available to house builders.

Current assessment:	Evidence that this is an issue	https://www.ft.com/content/a3c94308-80dd-11e7-94e2-c5b903247afd FiMT Research on Veterans' housing
	Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts	Ultimately this is about the need for homes for Veterans. The Forces in Mind Trust research estimates that there are over 1,000 urgent cases of homelessness (i.e. nowhere to go at all) amongst the Veterans community every year and around 3,000 to 4,000 instances of homelessness experiences every year by Veterans. The enhanced housing service within the Veterans Gateway received 1,216 applications for housing advice in the last year. Stoll had 220 applications for housing from vulnerable Veterans with no access to accommodation, Haig has over 1,000 applications per year and these are figures repeated across the Veterans housing sector. The DSC research identified 4,688 properties ringfenced for Veterans in the UK, but bearing in mind that there are around 3,000 to 4,000 new homeless households within the Veterans sector every year and the majority of these properties will be lived in for multiple years. Of these 4,688 properties, 1,240 were identified as family units, 1,806 are 1-bedroom properties and 1,247 are single occupancy (i.e. a room or a studio flat). We need more properties to meet demand!
	How this issue is mostly responded to? (signposted, offered assistance etc.) Is there data to support?	In recent years the DIO has insisted that they want 'best value' for any asset they sell or dispose of and have put all their land sales out to public tender, which have been won invariably by for-profit house builders. We would like sales to guarantee affordable housing for Veterans or, preferably, Veterans housing providers being given the opportunity to lease or purchase small parcels of land, in areas where there is available work, to support Veterans in the area – many of whom have settled having served within the Garrison.
	Assessment of most common reason for why this is an issue?	A growing population and a lack of house building to meet demand in recent years. Reduction in the subsidy for social housing, selling off of council properties through the Right to Buy scheme. A lack of strategic thinking about how best to use MoD land.
Comparison to previous Financial Years:	Can you provide comparative stats? Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts of previous year	N/A
	Based on FY18/19 so far do you predict this will remain a top 5 issue next FY?	Yes.
Future predictions:	Based on opinion/experience, do you predict this will remain a top issue over the next 5 years?	Yes.

Issue: 6	Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) – Slowness of Payment
Further details of	Service leavers entitled to AFCS payments are not paid the bulk of their AFCS payment until shortly after discharge. This prevents many

issue, if required:	<p>of them from acquiring a suitable property whilst they are still serving from which to make their recovery, attend DMRC etc. Currently a small proportion of AFCS is usually paid prior to discharge, whilst the remainder is withheld until after the final day of service so that the exact amount owing, including GIP / pension, is precisely calculated.</p> <p>While the final award may be subject to very minor change, in the majority of serious cases the approximate amount of the final award is not in doubt. The Housing Cluster urges MOD to amend its rules on AFCS awards to enable the payment of at least 50% as early as possible and before discharge to facilitate house purchase.</p>	
Current assessment:	Evidence that this is an issue	This is a newly raised issue by the Housing Cluster; it concerns Cobseo housing charities seeking to assist injured and disabled Service leavers with house purchase.
	Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts	Haig Housing Trust has bought 56 properties for wounded or disabled service leavers since 2010 – on average seven per annum. Whilst the numbers of those needing special housing purchase are small in comparison with the number of general needs applications made to Haig (c 900 per annum) it is a significant issue for those concerned. The late payment of AFCS makes it complicated to purchase a shared ownership / leasehold property and often leads to the charity having to pay 100% of the purchase price up front whilst hoping that the final AFCS award enables the veteran to purchase their share. Whilst the number of battle casualties being discharged has reduced since the aftermath of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, there remains a number of training accidents etc. leading to AFCS awards and special housing purchases.
	How this issue is mostly responded to? (signposted, offered assistance etc.) Is there data to support?	N/A
	Assessment of most common reason for why this is an issue?	N/A
	Can you provide comparative stats? Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts of previous year	N/A
Future predictions:	Based on FY18/19 so far do you predict this will remain a top 5 issue next FY?	The issue will not go away.
	Based on opinion/experience, do you predict this will remain a top issue over the next 5 years?	It is significant and could be easily sorted out by MOD.

Issue: 7	Selective Licensing
Further details of issue, if required:	A selective license is introduced by Local Authorities who ask private landlords (i.e. non Housing Association landlords) to pay for a license to support the Local Authority in dealing with anti-social behaviour and other local housing issues. There are few exemptions and we do not believe it is in the spirit or the intendment of Selective Licensing to ask Veterans charities who are not housing Associations to pay these fees.

	<p>This can amount to £750 per property for a 5-year licence which amounts to a considerable cost to a charity running a scheme with many properties. These costs have to be met from our members already stretched budgets resulting in the reduction of funds available for essential maintenance and repairs or support services.</p> <p>Perversely Selective Licensing disadvantages the very people it is meant to protect. Selective Licensing was intended to tackle rogue landlords and improve areas suffering from anti-social behaviour and social deprivation. By contrast, veterans' housing providers are already held to account by the exacting standards of charity law, their funders and/or the Homes and Communities Agency.</p> <p><u>Our Request:</u></p> <p>The issue of Selective Licensing comes at a time when there a number of concerns affecting providers of housing to the Veterans community. Many are already experiencing the 1% (in actual terms) rent reduction every year for the next four years. It also comes at a time of increased uncertainty around the roll out of the proposed cap to Local Housing Allowance for supported housing providers and concerns around the impact of Universal Credit; some providers have already experienced increased arrears during pilot trials of the new benefit system.</p> <p>Therefore the Cobseo Housing Cluster requests that the Veterans strategy uses the power under S79 (4) Housing Act 2004 to issue a statutory instrument exempting veterans' housing providers from the costs of Selective Licensing, thus removing a punitive and significant cost from these important services.</p>	
Current assessment:	Evidence that this is an issue	This is not a new issue raised by the Housing Cluster and we wrote to the Secretary of State about it on 21 st August 2017.
	Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts	N/A – a landlord issue and not a beneficiary issue.
	How this issue is mostly responded to? (signposted, offered assistance etc.) Is there data to support?	N/A
	Assessment of most common reason for why this is an issue?	The biggest reason it is a top issue is that it is a levy targeted at private landlords which is creating a financial burden on charities that do not charge the same levels of rents that private landlords will – and offer a far greater (and more important) service.
Comparison to previous Financial Years:	Can you provide comparative stats? Number of contacts about this issue as % of total contacts of previous year	N/A
	Based on FY18/19 so far do you predict this will remain a top 5 issue next FY?	The issue will not go away.
Future predictions:	Based on opinion/experience, do you predict this will remain a top issue over the next 5 years? Yes – we do not know of any moves to change the non-selective application of Selective Licensing and we believe an exemption would be appropriate.	