

## *Advice for Ex Armed Forces Personnel*

You should start exploring your housing options as soon as you know you are leaving the armed forces.

Reading Borough Council is committed to honouring the Armed Forces Community Covenant. The aim of the Covenant is to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community - including veterans - and make it easier for services personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available.

### *Before you leave the forces*

If you are likely to need advice and assistance to find accommodation you should contact the Homeless Prevention Service straightaway.

We will assess your situation and give you advice on your options so you can make an informed decision about your housing. This may include:

- advice on finding a private rented property
- a referral to our Rent Guarantee Scheme
- making an application to apply to join Homechoice (Reading's social housing register)
- advice on making benefit claims for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit which can help towards the cost of your rent



*Six months before you leave the forces, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) will give you a Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement with the date that you will stop being entitled to forces accommodation. You should give this to the Homeless Prevention Service soon as it is issued.*

### **Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)**

You can also contact the JSHAO for advice on your civilian housing options at any time during your career. Call 01252 787574 or attend one of their civilian housing options briefs delivered across the UK, Germany and Cyprus each year.

The JSHAO also runs the MOD referral scheme which may help you to find a housing association home. You can apply if you are:

- married or a separated spouse still in services family accommodation (SFA)
- single and living in a hostel within 6 months of leaving the forces

### *If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness*

If you have already left the armed forces and are homeless or threatened with homelessness you should immediately get in touch with the Homeless Prevention Service.

We will assess your situation and work with you to create a personalised housing plan which will include your housing options.

As someone who has been in the armed forces you may be entitled to emergency accommodation. Emergency accommodation can be provided if we assess you as being in priority need. You will normally have a priority need if you, or someone in your household:

- is pregnant
- has dependent children who normally live with you
- has been made homeless by an emergency such as flood or fire
- is vulnerable as a result of any physical/mental conditions, a learning disability or due to your time spent and experiences of the armed forces

## *Your Housing Options*

We will discuss options that are appropriate for you and your household. The demand for all forms of housing in Reading is very high therefore you should explore all the housing options which are available to you.

Your options may include:

- **Looking for Private Rented Accommodation** - you should consider the size and type of accommodation you need for your household and how much rent you can afford. Most landlords will ask for a cash deposit (in case you fail to pay your rent or cause damage to their property).

If you don't have a deposit we may be able to help either through the Rent Guarantee Scheme or by lending you the money to pay a cash deposit direct to your landlord.

- **The Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS)** - this scheme helps households on low incomes into private rented accommodation. We pay the rent to your landlord and provide a deposit guarantee (instead of a cash deposit). The scheme removes the needs for a guarantor because the Council guarantee the rent to the landlord for the duration of the tenancy. You must pay your rent to us and save for your own deposit - see our factsheet "*Rent Guarantee Scheme*" for more information.
- **Applying to Homechoice** (Reading's Housing Register) so you can bid for a Council or Housing Association home. Visit [www.reading.gov.uk/homechoice](http://www.reading.gov.uk/homechoice) to complete an online application form or pick one up from the Civic Offices reception.

As a member of the armed forces you don't need a "local connection" which requires you to have lived in the Borough for the three years before you apply. You may also qualify for an "additional preference" which could give you higher priority for rehousing. See our Allocations Scheme ([www.reading.gov.uk/homechoice](http://www.reading.gov.uk/homechoice)) for more details.

## *Help with housing costs*

If you are working and on a low income or if you claim welfare benefits you may be eligible for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help towards your rent. You may also be eligible for Council Tax Support. Use our online calculator to check your entitlement – [becs.reading.gov.uk](http://becs.reading.gov.uk)

## **The Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**

LHA limits the amount of benefit/credit you could get towards your rent based on the number of bedrooms your household is eligible for:

Shared accommodation	£81.14/week	£351.61/month
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1 bedroom	£153.02/week	£663.08/month
2 bedroom	£193.98/week	£840.58/month
3 bedroom	£221.79/week	£961.09/month
4+ bedrooms	£315.12/week	£1365.52/month

You can ask for these payments to go directly to your landlord.

## *What other help could I get as a veteran?*

### **Veteran's Housing Advice**

This organisation is provided in partnership with The Royal British Legion, Shelter and Connect Assist. Their main aim is to make it easier for you to access information and support including applying for veterans housing schemes, help with deposits, buying a home in the UK and finding supported accommodation.

0808 801 0880 (8am-8pm 7days/week) [www.veteranshousingadvice.org.uk](http://www.veteranshousingadvice.org.uk)

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### **SSAFA – the Armed Forces Charity**

This charity provides advice and assistance to those eligible for help across a range of issues including housing advice and the provision of some housing facilities.

Call 0800 731 4880 or 020 7463 9398 or visit [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)

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### **SPACES (Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services)**

A housing advice and placement service providing a national network of supported housing options for veterans with a range of needs.

Call 01748 833 797 or visit [www.spaces.org.uk](http://www.spaces.org.uk)

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### **Veteran's Aid**

This service provides immediate, practical support to all ex - armed forces personnel who are homeless, facing homelessness or in crisis.

Call 0800 012 6867 or visit [www.veterans-aid.net](http://www.veterans-aid.net)

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### **Haig Housing**

This service provides general needs housing for ex-service single people and families.

[www.haighousing.org.uk](http://www.haighousing.org.uk)

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### **Stoll Housing**

This service provides supported accommodation for veterans with support needs such as physical disability, mental health issues, substance misuse issues, homelessness or ongoing health conditions.

Call 020 7385 2110 or visit [www.stoll.org.uk](http://www.stoll.org.uk)

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## *Contact the Homeless Prevention Service*

We are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. You will initially be seen by a Housing Advice Support Officer who will then allocate your case to either:

- a Homeless Prevention Officer if you are threatened with homelessness within 56 days or are immediately homeless
- or a Homeless Resolution and Enablement Officer if you are still in accommodation but you are worried about becoming homeless in the future

Call: 0118 937 2165 (office hours)

Email: [Housingadvice@reading.gov.uk](mailto:Housingadvice@reading.gov.uk)

Drop-in Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU

This information can be provided in alternative formats (Braille, audio, large print) and other languages on request