

Housing advice for former members of the Armed Forces



www.testvalley.gov.uk



TestValleyBC



@TestValleyBC

Test Valley's Community Covenant with the Armed Forces

The Council is signed up to a community covenant with the Armed Forces. This is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community. The covenant has five main aims;

- Nurture public understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the armed forces community
- To recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the armed forces community
- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas
- Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life
- Encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement.

The covenant does not give ex military personnel automatic rights to access and obtain social housing but it does ensure that appropriate housing advice, assistance and support is given to serving and ex military personnel to assist them in seeking to secure accommodation and prevent homelessness.

Key Advice:

- Check Test Valley Borough Council's housing allocation scheme (www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk) to see if you are eligible to apply to Hampshire Home Choice. This is the Council's housing register that enables you to be considered for social and affordable housing in Test Valley
- A person serving in the regular forces qualifies to join the Housing Register
- A person who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of social housing under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 qualifies to join the housing register
- It is very important that you get help and advice with your housing and future accommodation as soon as you are aware that you are going to be discharged

Preparing for discharge

Key Facts;

- The Council has a duty to secure housing for certain groups of households being discharged from the armed forces. Those it does not have a duty to accommodate will be given appropriate advice and assistance to prevent you from becoming homeless.
- Housing is very expensive in Test Valley, especially compared to the notional rents you have been used to paying whilst in service quarters. You may have to consider securing accommodation in an area which is affordable to you and your household
- You do not have to wait until your discharge from the armed forces. You can explore what housing options are available to you whilst you are still serving within the armed forces

Prevention

It is very important that wherever possible you prevent yourself from becoming homeless and secure accommodation to move into when you are discharged from the armed forces.

What can you do to prevent yourself from becoming homeless upon discharge?

- Explore your housing options as soon as possible, the more time you allow to explore the options the more likely you are to secure accommodation. You need to start talking to the Council, private landlords and other agencies as soon as possible
- Save regularly/monthly to raise a deposit for home ownership or shared ownership
- Apply to local authority housing registers where you are eligible to join. You can apply to more than one local authority. If you have served in the armed forces in the past five years or are still currently serving you can apply for social housing at www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk.
- There is severe shortage of social housing and a considerable wait. It is important that you do not rely solely on this option to prevent your homelessness. You will be expected to bid each week for accommodation.
- Accessing private rented accommodation. The Council may be able to assist you in raising the rent in advance and/or the deposit. This will depend on

whether you qualify. You can secure private rented accommodation in Test Valley or another borough. You may also be able to qualify for assistance towards the monthly rent payments. The Housing Options team at Test Valley can advise you where to look for private rented accommodation, assist you in affordability assessments and the rent in advance and/or deposit. For more information please contact 01264 368000 or www.testvalley.gov.uk

- If you are interested in buying your own home or shared ownership-you can apply to Home to Buy South. Home Buy South also has other affordable housing products available. See www.helptobuysouth.co.uk or contact 0800 456 11 88
- Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) - if you are single person you can look to rent a room in a house. Please note if you are under 35 and will be relying on assistance with your rent, you will only qualify for the single room rent.
- Veteran's accommodation-please talk to your welfare officer who may be able to advise you and refer you to veteran accommodation.

What happens if I haven't been able to secure accommodation and my 93 day notice is due to expire?

- You must contact your local authority as soon as you receive your notice from The DIO. The local authority will then work through all the above options with you. Ensure your local authority has a copy of your notice
- Test Valley Borough Council will liaise with the DIO to negotiate that you can stay after the date your notice expires, you will be charged a higher rent after this date
- 37 days into your notice you can make a homeless application to any local authority. They will have a duty under s195 of the 1996 Housing Act to try and prevent your homelessness. They will assess your needs and together will agree a personalised housing plan with you. The personalised housing plan will outline reasonable steps expected to be taken by yourself and the Council to try and prevent your homelessness.

There will be an expectation from your local authority that you will take responsibility for your housing and work with the local authority to prevent your homelessness.

What happens if I do become homeless?

The Council will have a duty to try and relieve your homelessness under s189b of the 1996 Housing Act. It will not have a duty to accommodate everybody.

When the Council accepts the relief duty the options available to you will depend on many factors.

Before the relief duty can be offered, do you have a local connection to Test Valley?

Please note this local connection criteria is different from the local connection criteria under Hampshire Homechoice.

To have a local connection with Test Valley, you have:

- lived in Test Valley area for the last 6 out of 12 months
- lived in Test Valley area for 3 out of 5 years
- worked in the Test Valley area
- Have a family member (parent or sibling) that resides in Test Valley and has done so for the past five years.

If you do not have a local connection to Test Valley, then the local council will refer you to the authority where you do have a local connection. Test Valley will carry out your housing assessment and refer you to the authority where you have a connection and notify you of this. Test Valley will not accept the relief duty.

What happens if I am homeless and I do have a local connection with Test Valley?

The council will spend 56 days from accepting the relief duty trying to help you secure accommodation. The options that will be explored are those that are detailed on page 2.

The council will conduct another housing assessment and revise your personalised housing plan. You will agree reasonable steps that both parties are going to do to try and find you accommodation.

What happens if I have nowhere to live during the relief duty?

The Council can provide interim accommodation for you, however the Council does not owe this duty to all households, you will only be provided with interim accommodation if you are in priority need.

If you are owed the duty to be provided interim accommodation this will be in the form of our family hostel or in temporary accommodation. Please note that temporary accommodation is not always available in Test Valley.

If your homelessness can not be relieved and you are in priority need and haven't caused your own homelessness then the Council will owe you the **full homeless duty**. You will be accommodated in temporary accommodation until the Council brings its full housing duty to an end with the offer of a twelve month tenancy in the private sector or you are offered social housing via Hampshire Home choice.

If you are in non-priority, after the relief duty has ended you are still entitled to advice and assistance.

Other agencies that may be useful for you when leaving the armed forces

Royal British Legion

www.support.britishlegion.org.uk

The British legion might be able to help you with the rent or deposit

SSAFA

www.ssafa.org.uk

SSAFA provide housing advice to people currently serving in the forces and ex services personnel and their families.

Shelter

www.shelter.org.uk

British Army website

www.army.mod/uk/welfare-support

Charities for ex service personnel

www.ctp.org.uk/resettlement-guides/charities

Support Line

www.supportline.org.uk/problems/armed-forces

War Veteran's

www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-war-vetrans

Test Valley Borough Council
Housing, Health & Communities Service

Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 3AJ
Tel: 01264 368000

Former Magistrates Court, Church Street, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 8AQ
Tel: 01794 527700

www.testvalley.gov.uk