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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation Document

National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel

Date of issue: 15 September 2016
Action required: Responses by 13 October 2016

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview	This consultation is to gather views on the draft <i>National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel</i> .
How to respond	<p>Please respond by completing the questionnaire at the back of this document and sending it to: VeteransPathwayConsultation2016@wales.gsi.gov.uk</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Homelessness Policy Team Housing Policy Welsh Government Rhydycar Business Park Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ</p>
Further information and related documents	Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.
Contact details	<p>For further information:</p> <p>Homelessness Policy Team Housing Policy Welsh Government Rhydycar Business Park Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ</p> <p>Email: VeteransPathwayConsultation2016@wales.gsi.gov.uk</p>
Data protection	<p>How the views and information you give us will be used:</p> <p>Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.</p> <p>The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with</p>

the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

CONTENTS

Summary	Page 5
National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel	Page 6
Response Form	Page 28

Summary

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the *National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel* which has been produced by the Welsh Government in partnership with stakeholders from both the housing and armed forces sector.

The Pathway has been developed in order to provide further advice to members of the services prior to their discharge in relation to helping them to avoid situations where they could become homeless.

The Pathway also looks to support those former members of the Services who have found themselves homeless, sometimes many years after being discharged.

Consultation responses

Your views are welcomed and a response form is provided at the back of this document. The questions ask for your views on the Pathway.

National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel

September 2016

Audience	<p>Third sector and partner organisations involved with supporting former members of the Armed Forces, local authorities; Registered Social Landlords; other housing service providers; Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committees; Local Health Boards and other provider agencies..</p>
Overview	<p>This document sets out the pathway for meeting the housing needs of former members of the Armed Forces who will be resettling in Wales.</p>
Action required	<p>For practitioners and stakeholders to be aware of their responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. In particular, Part 2 which addresses the duties on local authorities to provide preventative homelessness services, and also other relevant frameworks and good practice.</p>
Further information	<p>DN – further information will appear here</p>
Additional copies	<p>This document is available from the Welsh Government website and is available bilingually.</p>
Related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (Part 2) • Housing Act 1996 (Part 7) • Code of Guidance for Local Authorities – Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (April 2015) • Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 • Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 • Welsh Government Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community in Wales

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

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DN – further information will appear here

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NATIONAL HOUSING PATHWAY FOR EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL

In recognition of their service for their country, the Welsh Government believes that every former member of the Armed Forces should be helped, if needed, to find suitable accommodation, whether directly on discharge or later in life. No-one should be allowed to become homeless.

Estimates of the number of members of the Armed Forces Community living in Wales vary and could be as high as a quarter of a million. This document sets out the support available in Wales to ensure that all those in need of accommodation or a service to retain or find accommodation can access it.

In support of the UK Government's Armed Forces Covenant, the Welsh Government has developed a package of support for the Armed Forces, their families and veterans in Wales. This package includes support for people in areas such as healthcare, education and housing, including priority status in the Homebuy scheme, Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for disabled ex-servicemen, Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs) and priority need status under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

The Welsh Government's commitment to this was established in "The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans" which was updated by the Armed Forces Covenant and the Welsh Government's response to the Covenant as set out in our "Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community in Wales".

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nations-commitment-cross-government-support-for-our-armed-forces-their-families-and-veterans>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/238719/7424.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-covenant-supporting-information>

<http://gov.wales/docs/dsijg/policy/130625afpackagesec1.pdf>

<http://gov.wales/docs/dsijg/policy/130625afpackagesec2.pdf>

ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT PRIOR TO END OF MILITARY SERVICE

HARDFACTS/Unit Resettlement Officer

Supports the transition to civilian life throughout your military career.

MOD Joint Services Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)

Provides Service Leavers and ex-Service Personnel still occupying Service Family Accommodation with advice on housing options and if possible places into social housing.

Veterans UK

The Ministry of Defence Veterans UK helpline provides assistance on many issues including benefits, housing and welfare.

Applying to a Housing Register

Each Authority's process is different, either online, at interview or a mixture of both. After applying, you will be put into a band. Every council has different policies and bands for ex-Armed Forces personnel will differ.

In general, veterans and reservists will receive further priority when seeking housing if they are suffering an injury or disability which is attributable to their service.

Veterans no longer need to demonstrate a connection to the local authority where they wish to live, providing their housing application is made within a reasonable period of leaving the services.

All veterans can apply for social housing with any local authority. They may receive additional preference due to having served in the forces.

Help to Buy

Two options are available:

The Welsh Government operates 'Help to Buy', a scheme to provide financial support to help ex-Service Personnel to buy their own property.

The Ministry of Defence also operates a Forces' Help to Buy scheme which enables servicemen and servicewomen to borrow up to 50% of their salary, interest free, to buy their first home.

The Supporting People Programme

Supports individuals to live independent lives and prevent homelessness. Supporting People Services are run through local authorities and often work closely with the teams operating the Housing Register.

People who may need support to maintain a tenancy should apply for support and will be assessed for eligibility and if successful they will refer you to a support provider depending on your specific needs.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Provides help to adapt properties for those who have been injured or disabled while in service.

Enable - Support

Supports individuals to find the most suitable way to adapt a property to maintain independent living

Local Authority Housing Options – Priority Need

As a result of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, each local authority has a duty prevent or relief someone's homelessness regardless of the individual characteristics and whether the individual is 'priority need'.

This would be via the 'reasonable steps' process as per section 66 and 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Assuming that the ex-serviceman or woman has engaged with the local authority leading up to his or her discharge, if accommodation has still not been sourced, accommodation will be secured by the local authority as a result of section 70 and 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

PRE DISCHARGE SUPPORT

The Welsh Government understands that it can be an unsettling time as you approach your discharge, particularly if you have been a member of the Armed Forces for some time and have become used to the structure it brings to you.

There are established advice services that can help you find accommodation.

I AM LEAVING THE ARMED FORCES. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

As part of making the transition back to civilian life, you should engage with your Unit Resettlement Officer who will take you through the HARDFACTS personal planning process. The Accommodation questions will help both you and your resettlement officer to understand whether you will have housing on discharge and what your next steps should be.

This will form part of the resettlement process which will commence up to two years before and continue up to 2 years after discharge.

I THINK HOUSING WILL BE AN ISSUE, WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

As a UK citizen, all housing options are open to you, from renting privately or renting a council or housing association property to buying a property of your own.

WHAT ADVICE CAN I GET?

When you are approaching discharge you will need timely and comprehensive advice on the housing options open to you.

The Joint Services Housing Advice Office will be able to support you by providing information and advice on housing options well in advance of discharge and should be your starting point:

Joint Services Housing Advice Office
Floor 1 Zone 1 Montgomery House Queens Avenue Aldershot GU11 2JN
Email - aws-jshao-mailbox@mod.uk
Advice line 0800 3287641

If you are single, then the Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services ("SPACES") will be able to support you to find suitable accommodation on discharge:

SPACES
The Beacon, SPACES Office, Marne Road, Catterick Garrison, Catterick, North Yorkshire. DL9 3AU
Email - spaces@riverside.org.uk
Tel: 01748 833797/872940/830191

In addition, the Ministry of Defence's Veterans UK helpline provides assistance on many issues, including accessing benefits, housing and welfare.

Veterans UK
Ministry of Defence
Norcross
Thornton Cleveleys
FY5 3WP
Email: veterans-uk@mod.uk
Freephone (UK only): 0808 1914 2 18
Telephone (overseas): +44 1253 866 043

Should you seek alternative or additional advice, other services are available to you as well as, where appropriate, your partner/wife/husband. Additional advice services are listed on page **x**.

Even if you are based outside of Wales, the local authority of the area you intend to return to will have a duty (s.60 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) to provide you with information, advice and assistance well before you are discharged. A list of each housing options team is contained on page **xx**.

I WILL NEED SUPPORT TO MAINTAIN A TENANCY

The Supporting People Programme is designed to help people who have housing-related support needs to gain or keep a home by offering a range of suitable support to that person.

If you think you may need support to maintain a tenancy you can also speak to the Supporting People team in your local authority to see if support is available from them. A list of each Supporting People team is contained on page **xx**.

I WOULD LIKE TO RENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Renting privately offers flexibility and possibly greater choice about where you live as well as the length of the tenancy, but does offer less security of tenure. In Wales the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2014 will provide additional security and protections for some tenants, while the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also regulates landlords to ensure that they are not just fit and proper, but also appropriately trained.

You can access the private rented market in a number of ways. Many landlords will advertise their properties on property websites, through local newspapers or via lettings agency's who might also act on the landlords behalf. You could also approach the relevant local authority who will be able to provide advice on local lettings as well as potentially operating their own private rented access schemes.

I WOULD LIKE TO RENT IN THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR

To access social housing you will need to make a housing application. The form will differ from area to area or housing association to housing association, but some local authorities do operate common housing register schemes which mean that you will only be required to complete one form.

Once you have completed the form, the housing association or council will use your application to decide your level of priority before you are added to the housing list.

Local authorities in England and Wales have the power to give additional preference to particular descriptions of people who fall within the reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs. All local authorities must consider, in the light of local circumstances, the need to give effect to this provision. People needing accommodation as a result of leaving the Armed Forces is a category of people to whom a Local Authority should consider giving additional preference within their allocation scheme.

To accompany your housing application, you should also provide a copy of your Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Accommodation. The Ministry of Defence issue this up to six months before you leave the armed forces.

WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN INJURED OR DISABLED WHILE IN SERVICE?

The Welsh Government believes that it is important that Service Personnel who have been seriously injured or disabled in Service and who have an urgent need for social housing should be given high priority within local authorities' allocation schemes in recognition of their service.

In addition, you will be able to access additional sources of support to help adapt a prospective property to meet your needs. This could mean you are entitled to a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from your local authority.

Also you could seek support from the Enable - Support for Independent Living scheme, which identifies the most suitable way for people to obtain adaptations to remain in their home independently. This will improve people's independence and quality of life, help to prevent emergency or unplanned admissions to hospital or residential care and can also facilitate earlier discharge from hospital.

If you feel that you need support to manage your care and support needs to help you to live more independently, you have a right to request an assessment from your local authority under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The local authority will support you to meet any identified care and support needs through the provision of information, advice and assistance, community or preventative services, a care and support plan or through other means.

I'M NOT SURE I WILL BE ABLE TO COPE WITH LIFE OUTSIDE THE FORCES?

Depending on the length of your service, the transition back to civilian life can be difficult and could put strain on your mental health, which in turn could impact on your relationships with family and friends. Alternatively, you may feel you have an issue with drugs and/or alcohol which you may not be able to control outside of your current environment.

The Welsh Government would highlight the work of the Veterans NHS Wales. This service, funded by the Welsh Government, provides veterans' therapists in each Local Health Board (contact details attached) and offers evidence-based treatment for clients, who are able to self refer or access the service via referral from a GP, charity or family member.

HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO WAIT?

Your length of time on the waiting list will depend on the area you wish to live in and the type and size of house you require as well as any additional preferences. In some areas there are not enough houses to meet demand, while others might have a surplus. The housing provider will be able to give you advice on the possible waiting time as well as confirm whether you have been given additional preference.

WILL I BE ASKED FOR A DEPOSIT OR RENT IN ADVANCE?

In most cases, a landlord will require a bond or rent advance before they will accept you as a tenant. Additionally, you might need to pay for new furniture and white goods. Your local authority will be able to provide advice on whether there are any bond schemes in their area, while they might also be able to make an application on your behalf for a Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) application to help you furnish your property.

If your Local Authority has been unsuccessful in obtaining any financial assistance, depending on your eligibility the Royal British Legion or other charitable organisations may be able to help to meet the costs.

In any case it is recommended you start saving for these types of expenses in advance of being discharged, for example, using a savings scheme (ie a Credit Union account). The earlier you start this, the more you will have saved when you come to be discharged.

A Tenancy Deposit Loan Scheme is also available to members of the Armed Forces. There are conditions to this scheme, which will include repayment within twelve months. You should speak to your transitional officer about accessing it.

I WANT TO BUY MY OWN PROPERTY. IS THERE ANY HELP FOR ME TO DO SO?

The Welsh Government operates a 'Help to Buy' scheme in Wales designed to provide financial support to those who might otherwise not be able to afford to purchase a property.

<http://helptobuywales.co.uk/?lang=en>

In addition, the Ministry of Defence operate a Forces' Help to Buy scheme which enables servicemen and servicewomen to borrow up to 50% of their salary, interest free, to buy their first home or move to another property on assignment or as their families' needs change.

<https://www.gov.uk/forces-help-to-buy>

Local Authorities and Housing Associations should also prioritise (for Low Cost Home Ownership) the partners of service personnel whose housing problems resulted from events linked to service, this includes widows and widowers of personnel who have been killed in service.

I AM WORRIED THAT I WON'T BE ABLE TO AFFORD MY RENT OR MORTGAGE?

Affordability can be a real issue for some ex servicemen or women, especially managing the finances of the household.

If you are being supported by a local authority under the 'reasonable steps' process, they might ask that you undertake training on financial management and the Welsh Government considers this a suitable and reasonable request.

If, however, you feel that you cannot afford the home that an authority has helped to source for you, you must raise this with your housing options worker within the authority. The legal definition of 'suitable accommodation' requires that it is affordable.

It is also important that you maximise your income by ensuring that you have access to the state benefits that you are entitled to. More information on benefits, including how to apply can be obtained from your local authority, but can also be found:

<https://www.gov.uk/>

WHAT DOES LOCAL CONNECTION MEAN FOR ME?

Some local authorities have decided to give more priority to people who have a 'local connection' so that people who live or work in the area or who have close family connections have a greater chance of being rehoused than other applicants in need.

A 'local connection' can be established for social housing purposes through residency (excluding those who reside in an area as a result of a prison sentence), employment or a family association. This means that serving members of the Armed Forces, and other persons who normally live with them as part of their household, do establish a 'local connection' with an area by virtue of serving, or having served, there while in the Armed Forces.

Someone can have a 'local connection' with more than one area, but you should be aware that your housing options might be impacted where you look to live in an area where you have no connection.

WHEN SHOULD I GET IN TOUCH WITH MY LOCAL AUTHORITY?

While the transition process effectively commences from the moment you start in the Armed Forces, approximately six months prior to discharge you should:

Make yourself known to relevant local authority. This is two fold, you can discuss your social and private housing options as well as make yourself (and your discharge date) known within the housing options team.

Consider how you will afford your bond or rent deposit and if necessary begin saving or access a tenancy deposit scheme.

MY DISCHARGE IS FAST APPROACHING AND I AM STILL WITHOUT SOMEWHERE TO STAY.

If you have been unable to secure housing on discharge you will likely be eligible for support from a Welsh local authority to help you find suitable accommodation under the provisions of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

If you are 56 days away from discharge and you have yet to source accommodation, a local authority will likely have a duty help you to find suitable accommodation.

You should consider contacting the relevant local authority's housing options team to discuss the options available to you. If you have been speaking to Veterans UK or the Joint Services Housing Advice Officer, they will be able to provide you with advice on when to trigger an application.

Where a duty is owed to you, this will need to be undertaken in partnership, with the both the local authority and yourself taking what are considered 'reasonable steps'. Page **xx** contains more details on the types of activities you might be asked to complete as part of your 'reasonable steps'.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I STILL HAVE NOWHERE TO STAY WHEN I AM DISCHARGED?

It is important that you do everything you possibly can to secure housing before you are discharged. If after these 56 days have lapsed and you are discharged without accommodation, the local authority will have a duty to secure suitable accommodation for you immediately. This may not be in the area you wish to live and is likely to be temporary accommodation. However, you need to be aware that this will only be the case if you have fully engaged with the 'reasonable steps' process outlined above. You cannot 'sit out' 'reasonable steps' and wait for the authority to have a duty to secure. This route might also include a brief stay in temporary accommodation while more suitable accommodation is being secured.

The accommodation that the Local Authority must secure could be in either the private or social sector and must be expected to last for at least six months. If it ends before the six months is up, through no fault of your own, then you will likely be entitled to further support from the Local Authority.

ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY

THREATENED WITH HOMELESSNESS WITHIN 56 DAYS – SELF REFERRED OR VIA HOUSING PROVIDER/SUPPORT WORKER/THIRD SECTOR

HOMELESS – SELF REFERRED OR VIA HOUSING PROVIDER/SUPPORT WORKER/THIRD SECTOR

IDENTIFIED VIA ROUGH SLEEPING OUTREACH TEAMS

IDENTIFIED VIA UNIT RESETTLEMENT OFFICER (within two years of discharge)

Local Authority Housing Options

As a result of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, each local authority has a duty to prevent or relieve someone's homelessness regardless of the individual characteristics and whether the individual is 'priority need'

This would be via the 'reasonable steps' process as per section 66 and 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

The first port of call for all person's homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Reasonable steps:

Support would depend on individual circumstances, but might include mediation, signposting to mental health support, Supporting People services, accessing a DFG, debt management, etc.

Applying to a Housing Register

Each Authority's process is different, either online, at interview or a mixture of both. After applying, you will be put into a band. Every council has different policies and bands for ex-Armed Forces personnel will differ.

Help to Buy

Two options are available:

The Welsh Government operates 'Help to Buy', a scheme to provide financial support to help ex-Service Personnel to buy their own property.

The Ministry of Defence also operates a Forces' Help to Buy scheme which enables servicemen and servicewomen to borrow up to 50% of their salary, interest free, to buy their first home.

Priority Need

Assuming that the ex-serviceman or woman has engaged with the local authority leading up to his or her discharge, if accommodation has still not been sourced, accommodation may be secured by the local authority as a result of section 70 and 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Eligibility will be determined by the individual circumstances.

POST DISCHARGE SUPPORT

Many ex servicemen or women struggle to adjust back to civilian life. This might be the result of the changes of routine or might even be the result of post traumatic stress disorder that manifests itself weeks or months after discharge.

I AM AT THREAT OF LOSING MY HOME. WHAT HELP CAN I GET?

In addition to the advice services listed above, if you are threatened with homelessness within 56 days then your local authority will likely have a duty to help you to prevent your homelessness. This will be via the 'reasonable steps' process so you will be expected to undertake some actions while the authority will deliver others.

Depending on your particular circumstances, the 'reasonable steps' could include:

- Negotiating with your landlord to rescind your notice or agree a repayment plan where arrears have been accrued.
- Undertaking debt advice training where arrears have accrued.
- Mediation with family where a family break up has occurred or is likely to occur.

It is vital that you engage with the local authority and fully participate in the 'reasonable steps'. Failure to do so might result in the local authority ending their support to you.

I AM HOMELESS. WHAT HELP CAN I GET?

First of all, do not wait until you become homeless to ask for help. The more time that both you and your local authority have to resolve the issue, the more likely a positive outcome can be achieved, including staying in your current home.

If you are homeless then you should present to your local authority immediately (a list of contact numbers are attached at page xx). You will likely be eligible for support under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and you might also be eligible to receive immediate temporary accommodation from the local authority.

An authority might not have a duty to provide you with temporary accommodation so you need to consider what friends and family you might be able to reside with while the Authority works with you to source alternative accommodation.

Dedicated accommodation for former members of the armed forces might be available. However, this will be dependent on availability of accommodation at the time as well as your specific needs.

There might also be a range of hostels you could access temporarily. The Local Authority will be able to provide you with options.

In addition, there are a range of third sector organisations that might be able to help you such as the Royal British Legion, Haig Housing, First Choice Housing Association, Alabaré, CAIS and Blind Veterans. Contact details for them are at page x.

I LEFT THE ARMED FORCES SOME TIME AGO. WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS NOW?

If you left within the past two years, you will still be able to engage with the transitional process. You should get in touch with Veterans UK (contact details on page [x](#)) on their Freephone line and explain your circumstances.

If your discharge was more than 2 years ago, then you should get in touch with your local authority who will be able to support you either with advice and assistance or with a duty to help you prevent or relief your homelessness. Contact lists are on page [x](#).

In addition, there will likely to be additional help available as a result of the Armed Forces Covenant and the local third sector organisations geared up to help ex servicemen and women.

I AM IN PRISON AND I'VE NO WHERE TO STAY ON RELEASE?

If you are in custody and due for release, there is an existing Pathway designed to support the resettlement for all of those due to leave custody - [The National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate](#).

Key to getting the full support included in this Pathway will be your agreement to participate in the resettlement support available from the Community Rehabilitation Company which commences approximately 12 weeks prior to release. Failure to do so might result in a local authority not being aware of your release and might hinder chances of you finding somewhere to stay.

You should ensure your Resettlement Officer (from the Community Rehabilitation Company) and who operate on the wing, is aware of your case and can make an application to the relevant Local Authority. Alternatively, you can ask a friend or family member to approach the Local Authority on your behalf.

I FEAR MY HEALTH IS BEING AFFECTED.

Whilst rare, the stress of working in the Armed Forces can affect the service personnel themselves and their families, but can manifest sometime later. Family break-up can occur and both parties can be suffering from mental health issues.

The Welsh Government would highlight the work of the Veterans NHS Wales. This service, funded by Welsh Government, provides veterans' therapists in each Local Health Board (contact details attached) and offers evidence-based treatment for clients, who are able to self refer or access the service via referral from a GP, charity or family member.

The Welsh Government is supportive of improving access to psychological therapies. A national action has also been commissioned which will enable Health Boards to ensure consistent provision of talking therapies. The funding will support the delivery of therapies - such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness - for people of all ages, and will include psychological therapies for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

I WILL NEED SUPPORT TO MAINTAIN THE TENANCY I NOW HAVE

The Supporting People Programme is designed to help people who have housing-related support needs to gain or keep a home by offering a range of suitable support to that person as needed.

If you think you may need support to maintain a tenancy you can also speak to the Supporting People team in your local authority to see if support is available from them. A list of each Supporting People team is contained on page **xx**.

I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF SERVICE I HAVE RECEIVED?

If you feel that your local authority has not fulfilled their duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, then you can challenge them.

Shelter Cymru will be able to provide you with independent advice on the details of your case and advise whether a challenge should be made. You can get in touch by ringing the national helpline - 0345 075 5005. Regional officers will be able to support you with your case if there are grounds for a challenge.

GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS

This section is aimed at providing additional information for those organisations, both statutory and voluntary, who support former members of the Armed Forces who are homeless.

Identification:

Some entrenched rough sleepers can be reluctant to engage with services as a result of poor past experiences and in some cases mental health issues. Some former members of the Armed Forces may also be reluctant to identify themselves as such for a variety of reasons.

Given the additional support available as a result of the Armed Forces Covenant, it is important that veterans are encouraged to identify themselves and are informed of the benefits of engaging with the new homelessness services as a result of the change in homelessness legislation which means anyone sleeping rough will likely be eligible for support to find accommodation from the local authority.

Making an Application for Homelessness Services:

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 allows for an application for homelessness support to be made to a local authority by the individual concerned as well as by anyone acting on behalf of the individual.

When making an application on behalf of a former member of the Armed Forces, it is important that you gather the following information:

- Personal details - including if known date of birth, national insurance number, telephone numbers, and indication this person is a former member of the Armed Forces etc;
- Brief housing history - including type of accommodation (ie, flat or house), the name of the landlord (and their relationship to the applicant), reason for leaving and length of stay at the property;
- Medical details – including any current health issues, details of current medication, if any, and name of GP if known; and
- Support needs – details of existing support being received including contact details for providers and reason for support being provided.

The local authority may also have a duty to provide temporary accommodation depending on whether they have 'reason to believe' that the applicant fits into one of the ten priority need categories. The priority need category covering Armed Forces leavers does not automatically give priority need to every Armed Forces veteran – it only covers those who are homeless immediately upon leaving the forces. However, priority need could be established under any of the other nine categories.

Further homelessness advice:

Shelter Cymru will be able to provide you with independent advice on the details of a case. You can get in touch by ringing the national helpline – 0345 075 5005.

EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE STEPS

- Services to resolve disputes between different parties, such as mediation and conciliation;
- Financial payments from a homelessness prevention fund;
- Specialist advice on welfare/benefit rights and debt/money advice;
- Independent housing advice;
- Joint working between local authorities and Registered Social Landlords to prevent homelessness;
- Joint approaches with other services such as Social Care and Health;
- Domestic abuse services;
- Crisis intervention;
- Referral to a statutory Intensive Family Support Team;
- Discretionary Housing Payments;
- Employment and training options advice;
- Housing/Tenancy support;
- Action to resolve anti-social behaviour;
- Options to facilitate access to the Private Rented Sector;
- Action to intervene with mortgage arrears;
- Action to support disabled applicants;
- Access to supported housing;
- Arranging accommodation with relatives and friends;
- Options for the accommodation of vulnerable people;
- Shared housing and/or houses of multiple occupation; or
- Supported lodgings.

ADVICE CONTACT LISTS

DN – further information will appear here

DEFINITIONS OF LANGUAGE USED

- **“Domestic abuse”** – refers to the definition of domestic abuse and abuse as outlined in s.58 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
- **“Homeless”** refers to the definitions outlined in s.55 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. To note, as a prison cell is not regarded as settled accommodation, anyone held in custody who meets the criteria for homeless is legally eligible for the duties contained within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
- **“Housing Association”** and **“Association”** mean a Registered Social Landlord or Registered Provider of Social Housing which provides social housing in Wales;
- **“Local Authority”** means a Welsh County, or County Borough Council;
- **“Local Authority Joint Assessment”** refers to a possible combined assessment utilising s.62 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014; s.19 and s.21 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; and s.6, s.7 and s.8 of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010;
- **“Local Connection”** – DN – further information will appear here;
- **“Priority need”** refers to the categories listed in section 70 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 which is relevant to duties under section 68 and 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act. Priority need arises where a person formerly serving in the regular Armed Forces of the Crown has been homeless since leaving those forces. Persons included in this definition mean the Royal Navy, the regular forces as defined by S.225 of the Army Act 1955, the regular Air Force as defined by S. 223 of the Air Forces act 1955 and Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service;
- **“Reasonable steps”** refers to the support offered by a Local Authority as per section 65 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
- **“Supporting People”** refers to support offered by the Welsh Government funded, Local Authority managed, Supporting People Programme Grant;
- **“Threatened with homeless”** refer to the definitions outlined in s.55 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. To note, as a prison cell is not regarded as settled accommodation, anyone held in custody who meets the criteria for threatened with homeless is legally eligible for the duties contained within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
- **“Vulnerable”** or **“vulnerability”** refers to the specific priority need category as per section 70 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Armed Forces Community Covenant

1. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise made by the UK Government to ensure that people serving in the Armed Forces do not face disadvantage as a result of their Service. It recognises the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families. The Armed Forces Act 2011 sets out a statutory requirement for the Secretary of State for Defence to present an annual Armed Forces Covenant Report detailing progress made on the delivery of commitments of the Covenant and new identified commitments.
2. The Welsh Government has developed strong relationships with its key partners, nurturing and promoting the Covenant in Wales. All 22 Local Authorities in Wales have signed a Community Covenant showing their commitment to the Armed Forces community in Wales, offering targeted support and services.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

3. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 reflects the Welsh Government commitment to reinforce the prevention of homelessness as set out in its Ten Year Homelessness Plan. It introduces new homelessness legislation, which came into force on 27th April 2015. Key features of the new legislation include:
 - Introducing a new corporate duty for local authorities to take reasonable steps to help people prevent homelessness;
 - Extend the definition of 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days;
 - A power rather than a duty to apply the intentionality test;
 - New powers allowing local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty through an offer of suitable private rented sector housing; and
 - Stronger duties on Housing Associations to support local authorities in carrying out their homelessness duties.
4. Where a local authority accepts a duty is owed, they will have to take 'reasonable steps' to support them to return to or find suitable accommodation before they become homeless. The *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2015* provides detail on how this should be undertaken.
5. The result will be more help for more people either at risk of becoming homeless, or homelessness, while also retaining the safety net for those vulnerable people who need the additional support.
6. Section 70 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 recognises those people who have formerly served in the regular Armed Forces of the Crown and who have been homeless since leaving those forces as being in priority need. However, Veterans may also experience difficulties post-discharge, in adjusting to civilian life. This may include, late onset of trauma, mental health difficulties, problems associated with physical injury and substance misuse. These issues may then result in difficulties in adapting to their new life and in some cases involvement

with the criminal justice system. Priority need might not be applicable for these individuals, the legislation ensures that they will receive support to help them find or retain accommodation.

7. While the early stages of a Local Authority's support is blind to local connection, to be eligible for the section 75 duty to secure accommodation, a local authority might consider someone's local connection to their area. Section 81 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the legal basis for establishing a local connection to an area. Factors that should give someone a local connection would include whether someone has been a normal resident in a particular area in the past, been employed there or has a family association there.
8. The Act also provides additional support for those leaving the Armed Forces. Section 52 (Homelessness strategies) ensure that each local authority must consider ex-servicemen and women when developing their homelessness strategies, while section 60 ensures that the advice and assistance service that each authority must have in place, is tailored to meet the needs of those who once served in the Armed Forces, amongst other groups.

Housing Act 1996

9. While the homelessness legislation contained in the Housing Act 1996 is no longer relevant to Wales, Part 6 (as amended in 2002) is still in place in Wales and provides the legislation covering the allocation of social housing.
10. Section 167(2) of the Housing Act 1996 gives local authorities the power to frame their allocation schemes so as to give additional preference to particular descriptions of people who fall within the reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs.
11. All Local Authorities must consider, in the light of local circumstances, the need to give effect to this provision. People needing accommodation as a result of leaving the Armed Forces is a category of people to whom a Local Authority should consider giving additional preference within their allocation scheme.

Supporting People Programme Grant

12. The Supporting People Programme plays a significant part in helping to prevent homelessness and in helping people to deal with the consequences of it. The Programme helps people to find and keep accommodation and helps others to avoid becoming homeless and to live as independently as possible.
13. As a result, it can make a significant contribution to the support available to those leaving the Armed Forces who have an identified support needs.
14. Funding is allocated via local authorities and is deployed according to local needs and priorities.

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

15. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 came into force in Wales in April 2016. While former service personnel do not have priority access under the legislation, the whole Act is focused on promoting people's opportunity for wellbeing and optimising an appropriate level of independence.
16. Under the Act a local authority must offer an assessment to any adult where it appears to that authority that the adult may have needs for care and support. The assessment will be conducted through a respectful conversation whereby the individual can determine their own personal outcomes and take full part in discussions about how they can be supported to best achieve them.
17. Housing staff should know about the changes under the Act, and to the new national eligibility criteria that applies in Wales, and ensure that any ex-service personnel seeking housing support are made aware of how they can be assessed if they have any care and support needs.
18. Further details about the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 is available at: <http://www.ccwales.org.uk/the-act/>

Response Form

Name:

Email:

Telephone:

Address:

Postcode:

Organisation
(if applicable)

Returning this form

The closing date for replies is **13 October 2016**

Please send this completed form to us by email to:

VeteransPathwayConsultation2016@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Or by post to:

Homelessness Policy Team

Housing Policy

Welsh Government

Rhydycar Business Park

Merthyr Tydfil

CF48 1UZ

If you are sending your response by email, please mark the subject of your e-mail **Veterans Pathway**

Publication of responses

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. Normally the name and address (or part of the address) of its author will be published along with the response, as this helps to show the consultation exercise was carried out properly.

If you would prefer your name and address not to be published, please tick here:

1. Do you agree a housing pathway for ex service personnel is needed?

Yes
No
Why?

2. Do you agree the pathways provided are appropriate for service personnel, pre and post discharge?

Yes
No
If not, do you have any suggestions on what needs to change or be strengthened?

3. As a veteran do you feel the pathway would assist you, and/or others, in understanding the housing options available to you in Wales?

Yes
No
If not, why not and where could the Pathway be strengthened?

4. As a practitioner, do you feel the pathway will assist you in helping to guide serving and ex-serving personnel to appropriate housing solutions to meet their needs?

Yes
No

If not, why not and where could the Pathway be strengthened?

5. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the Pathway?

Yes
No