



Patron Her Majesty The Queen

*Dr. Chris Simpkins DMA, Hon.DUniv, DL
Director General*

The Royal British Legion
199 Borough High Street
London SE1 1AA

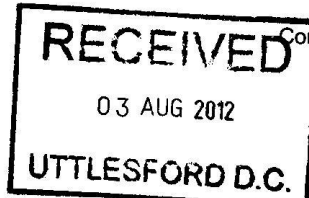
T 020 3207 2361
F 020 3207 2276
W www.britishlegion.org.uk

Mr J Mitchell
Chief Executive
Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
London Road
SAFFRON WALDEN
CB11 4ER

Date: 31 July 2012

Reference: 12/065

Contact: dmartin@britishlegion.org.uk



Dear Mr Mitchell

Access to social rented housing is a major source of frustration for many Service Leavers, veterans and their families. The very mobile nature of their work can put them at a serious disadvantage when they leave Service, lose their military accommodation and find that they are in need of affordable housing.

The Government has recognised this and, in its recently published housing allocations guidance, strongly encourages local authorities to consider how they can award appropriate priority to serving personnel, veterans and their families. I therefore urge your authority to adopt measures that, in line with the principles of Armed Forces Covenant (as enshrined in the Armed Forces Act 2011), recognise the unique commitment to society made by our Armed Forces and address any disadvantage they experience as a result of Service.

Allocation policies can disadvantage members of the Armed Forces, primarily due to the conflict between the weight applied to both local connection and waiting times and the mobility inherent in an Armed Forces career. One authority, for example, looks to address this disadvantage by backdating the registration of recently discharged ex-Service applicants to their enlisted date. Another provides recognition of the unique commitment made by our Armed Forces by awarding a community contribution priority to those with a Service background. A third sets aside a quota of homes for Service personnel with a link to the area.

We hope that your authority has already taken steps in this direction and, if so, I encourage you to explore how the new allocations guidance may enable you to provide even greater support to the Armed Forces community. If not, then I would invite you consider how your allocation policy can be developed to meet the Nation's obligations towards our Armed Forces.

To explain further, I enclose further information on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and details of the relevant measures included in the recently published 'Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local authorities in England'.

Shoulder to shoulder with all who Serve

Registered Charity: The Royal British Legion, Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA
Registered Charity Number: 219279



The Armed Forces Covenant

In the Armed Forces Act 2011 the Government enshrined in law the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. This sets out the relationship between the Nation, the State and the Armed Forces. The principles state that members of the Armed Forces and their families:

- should have their unique obligations and sacrifices recognised,
- must not face disadvantage as a result of their Service and,
- may be justified in receiving special treatment in certain circumstances.

To complement this at a local level, the Government and the Legion are encouraging local authorities to sign and develop Community Covenants. The aim of these is to inspire local communities to support the Service and veteran community in their area and promote understanding and awareness amongst the public about the issues affecting the Armed Forces community. The Legion believes that the issue of access to social housing for those that have served our country is fundamental to the Nation honouring its obligations under the Covenant.

Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local authorities in England

This new guidance for local authorities in England features a number of measures relevant to the Armed Forces community. This includes two measures that the Government intends will become statutory requirements once the relevant regulations have been passed by Parliament:

- Members of the Armed Forces, former service personnel applying within five years of discharge, bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces and serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to need to move for medical reasons must not be disqualified from a waiting list on the grounds that they do not have a local connection and ,
- that additional preference must be awarded to certain categories of serving and former members of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces, bereaved spouses and civil partners of the members of the Armed Forces.

In addition there is a further measure that encourages authorities to tailor their allocation policies to improve the support they provide to the Armed Forces community. The Government strongly encourages local authorities to take into account the needs of all serving or former Serving personnel when framing their allocation schemes and to give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or former Service personnel who may have been disadvantaged by the requirements of military service. It provides a number of suggestions including awarding preference to those that have recently left or are close to leaving the Armed Forces and setting aside a proportion of properties of ex-Service personnel under a local lettings policy.