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FAIRER SOCIAL HOUSING RULES FOR SERVICE PERSONNEL

- Government puts service personnel on a level playing field for council housing -

Service personnel leaving the UK Armed Forces should soon find it easier to get a council house following changes to the way social housing is allocated. Housing Minister Yvette Cooper today announced that the Government will amend the law to ensure service personnel are put on an equal footing with other people when applying for social housing.

Existing legislation allows local councils to take into account whether applicants have a local connection when prioritising applicants for social housing.

The legislation can put serving personnel at a disadvantage, as it is not possible for them to establish a local connection with an area through residence or employment when serving in the Armed Forces.

A recent small scale study of 17 local councils carried out by the Department for Communities and Local Government found that there were regional differences in how service personnel looking for social housing are treated.

Housing Minister Yvette Cooper said:

“It’s right we provide our servicemen and women with the best possible support as they move back to civilian life.

“The service our Armed Forces give to their country must not place them at any disadvantage when applying for a council house.

“We are closing this loop-hole which has led to some former service personnel facing an uphill battle getting access to social housing.”

Derek Twigg, Minister for Veterans, said:

“I have been determined to resolve this disadvantage that members of the Armed Forces have been experiencing in accessing social housing.

“The Ministry of Defence and Communities and Local Government have worked closely together to address this issue. The Government’s decision to change the legislation at the earliest opportunity will ensure that service leavers are not treated differently to other applicants.

“This further underlines the Government’s determination to help veterans and service personnel.”

The Government will make the necessary changes to housing legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Local councils in England are responsible for framing their own policies and procedures for allocating social housing.

Notes to Editors

1. The definition of local connection is provided in legislation – S199 of the Housing Act 1996. A person has a local connection with a local authority district if he has a connection because of normal residence of choice (previous or current); employment; family connections; or other special circumstances. Residence will not be of a person’s choice, nor will they be considered to be employed there, if serving in the Armed Forces.

2. Service personnel are subject to the same access rules as everyone else. Local authority lettings are based on need, with priority going to those in the greatest need who have waited the longest.
3. Housing authorities are required to have and to publish an allocation scheme for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing

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