



Dover District Council

Veterans' Guidebook

A guidebook for veterans and those who support them

Version 1 - 2025



RECOGNISE, REMEMBER, INTEGRATE, SUPPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Do You Qualify as a Veteran?	3
Why This Handbook?	3
The Covenant	3
Emotional Pathway	4
Healthcare & Wellbeing	5
- Wellbeing	
- Substance Misuse	
- Gambling	
Managing Finances After Leaving the Forces	6
- Bank Accounts	
- Universal Credit	
- Entitlements	
Housing	7
- Registering with Your Local Authority	
- Buying a Home	
Job search and skills transference	8
- Skills Transference	
- Job Centre Plus	
The Impact of Military Life on Families	9
Armed Forces Connect	10



INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to guide all individuals who have left the Armed Forces and those who support them, whether recently or some time ago. It provides information specific to veterans and their families, offering a brief overview of what Dover District Council can do for you as a veteran in civilian life. As a Council proud of its Gold Covenant Award status, we are committed to supporting you.

DO YOU QUALIFY AS A VETERAN?

A veteran is defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces, whether in regular or reserve roles, including Merchant and Mariner personnel who have participated in military operations. While the term "veteran" can be broadly interpreted, it fundamentally describes individuals whose commitment extends beyond duty, forming lifelong bonds through shared experiences, camaraderie and a deep sense of purpose.

WHY THIS HANDBOOK?

Transitioning from military to civilian life can be challenging. Many individuals entering civilian life do not see themselves as "veterans." This may stem from a belief that the term does not fully capture their experiences or may downplay their roles. The significant shift requires new routines that may feel unfamiliar. Pride can sometimes hinder the acceptance of these challenges, leading to missed opportunities for support during challenging times. Recognizing these challenges, this handbook is designed to support all frontline officers, delivery partners, charities, partners of veterans, and veterans themselves. By acknowledging the unique experiences and needs of each group, we aim to provide comprehensive support and resources to facilitate a smoother transition to civilian life.

THE COVENANT

Dover District Council is dedicated to supporting the Armed Forces Community. By signing the Armed Forces Covenant, we demonstrate our commitment to providing easy access to services and support for this community.

WHAT IS THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT?

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge acknowledging that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, along with their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they have served

WHAT IS THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT?

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary pledge of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces community. It complements the national Armed Forces Covenant, outlining mutual obligations between the Nation, the Government, and the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces Community includes various groups, regular and reservist personnel, veterans, service leavers, dependents and carers, whose presence varies across the country. In the Dover district, while official figures are hard to come by, the significant military footprint suggests a large Armed Forces Community, with many veterans living and working in the area.

THE AIMS OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community and raise awareness of the issues they face
- Recognise and remember the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces Community
- Promote activities that help integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life
- Encourage the Armed Forces Community to support the wider community through participation in events and joint projects.

EMOTIONAL PATHWAY

Some individuals leaving the Army transition smoothly to civilian life, while others, regardless of their length of service, may find the adjustment challenging. This transition can evoke various emotions, including uncertainty and anxiety. Being aware of these feelings can help you and your family navigate the transition journey more effectively.

Table 1 illustrates some of these potential emotions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling of loss ● Loss of identity ● Fear of the unknown ● Lack of competency ● Lack of control ● Loss of purpose ● Needing to be alone ● Confused about civilian life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loss of camaraderie ● Feeling unfulfilled ● Becoming angry quickly ● Financial worries ● Feeling undervalued ● General anxiety & worry ● Feeling inadequate ● Insecurity
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Table 1

CHANGE

Individuals encounter change throughout their lives and develop unique coping mechanisms. The strategies employed during military service can aid in transitioning to civilian life. Being aware of potential emotional experiences in advance and taking gradual steps may help in overcoming these challenges.

STEPS TO CHANGE

When faced with change, most individuals go through a similar progression of stages. Understanding these stages can help people cope and provide reassurance when they feel stuck. Many descriptions of change involve three core stages, as illustrated in Diagram 1.

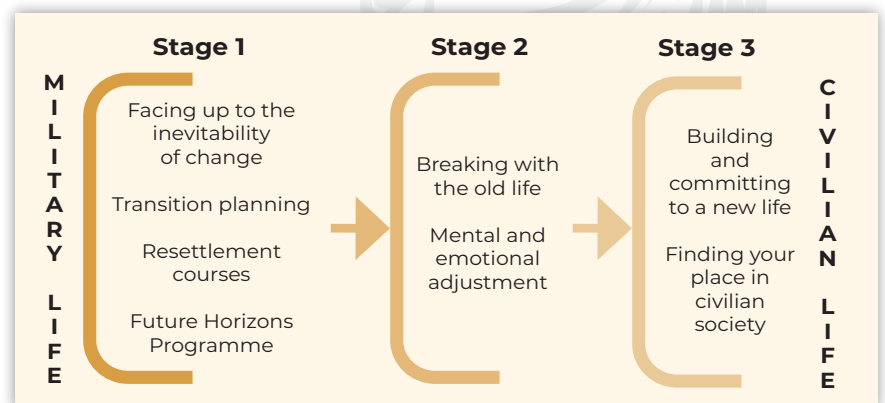


Diagram 1

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Recognising Veterans in the UK Health System

Recognising veterans within the UK health system is crucial for several reasons:

Distinct Health Needs: Veterans often have unique health requirements due to their military service, including physical injuries, mental health challenges, and exposure to specific environments (e.g. combat zones). Acknowledging their service ensures they receive tailored care.

Access to Specialised Services: By recognising veterans, healthcare providers can promptly direct them to specialised services. This helps veterans access the care they need without unnecessary delays.

Raising Awareness: Increasing awareness among health professionals about veterans' experiences enables them to better understand the unique issues faced by this population. This awareness leads to improved care and support.

Honouring Contributions: Recognising veterans honours their sacrifices and contributions to society. It inspires future generations and reinforces the values that define our nation.

Helpful resources

NHS 111 service	for non-emergency issues
Big White Wall	A safe space to discuss whatever is on your mind (free sign up required) www.togetherall.com
Combat Stress	Support for mental health issues 0800 1381619 www.combatstress.org.uk
PTSD Resolution	Trauma therapy 0300 302 0551 www.ptsdresolution.org
Samaritans	Confidential emotional support 116 123 www.samaritans.org
OP Courage	Free NHS mental health service for all ex-military personnel 0300 365 2000

MANAGING FINANCES AFTER LEAVING THE FORCES

Some May Need More Guidance Than Others

Consider the challenge of quitting your job, relocating and establishing a new social identity all at once. While most of us don't face such a situation simultaneously, this is the reality for many individuals transitioning out of the Armed Forces in the UK.

This transition often involves moving to a different area and navigating the intricate network of organisations that make up the civilian housing system.

To clarify, the majority of individuals transitioning out of the Armed Forces successfully secure new jobs and homes with relative ease. Contrary to what some headlines suggest, veterans are not more prone to homelessness than the general population. However, some service leavers do face challenges during their housing transition, especially after spending years in subsidised Ministry of Defence accommodation, where they didn't have to manage practical matters like paying bills.

Helpful resources

Citizens Advice Bureau Must mention that you are ex Armed Forces
0800 144 8848 www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Step Change Free impartial debt advice
0800 138 1111 www.stepchange.org

Barclays Bank Barclays supports serving personnel, veterans, reservists and the wider armed forces community across the UK and US, through its Military & Veterans Outreach (MVO).
0345 734 5345
www.barclays.co.uk

Dover District Council 01304 821199
www.dover.gov.uk



HOUSING

Some individuals may struggle with managing their finances after transitioning to civilian life. Human nature drives us to seek comfort and material wellbeing. In a fast-paced society that craves instant gratification, it takes inner strength and personal discipline to resist the allure of things we cannot afford.

Effective money management is crucial for achieving long-term goals, success and happiness. This life skill, often acquired over time out of necessity, empowers individuals to take control of their finances. By living within their means, saving for both short and long-term objectives, and creating a realistic plan to pay off debts, individuals can reduce stress and uncertainty while promoting overall wellbeing.

When individuals leave the forces, they may lack these skills, as many financial obligations are deducted from their salary before it is deposited into a personal bank account. Consequently, the process of budgeting and setting aside money for ongoing bills may not have been a concern until they transition into civilian life.

Helpful resources

Stoll Provides affordable, high-quality housing and support services to enable vulnerable and disabled veterans to lead fulfilling, independent lives.
020 7385 2110
www.stoll.org.uk

OpFortitude A pathway for veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness into supported housing or to keep them in their current home.
0800 9520774
www.riverside.org.uk/care-and-support/veterans

KHC Kent Home Choice is for applying to the housing register or making a housing options enquiry if you are going to be homeless.
www.kenthomechoice.org.uk

Care for veterans Supporting physically disabled ex-service personnel of the past, present and future.
01903 213458
www.careforveterans.org.uk

Shelter Homelessness Charity
0808 303 5314
www.shelter.org.uk



JOB SEARCH AND SKILLS TRANSFERENCE

Veterans of our Armed Forces significantly enrich society not only during their time in service but also in various aspects of life after they have left the forces. Nevertheless, many veterans still encounter substantial difficulties once they transition out of the military, with some finding it hard to access the job market entirely.

Many veterans have a set of unique skills and a strong work ethic, making them valuable assets to any organisation. However, there are a significant number finding themselves unemployed.

Helpful resources

Forces Employment Charity Provides life-long, life-changing support, jobs and training opportunities to Service leavers, veterans, reservists and their spouses, partners and children.
0121 262 3058
www.forcesemployment.org.uk

Life Works Programme offering tailored employability support to Armed Forces veterans and the families of those currently serving.
0800 319 6844
www.wearelifeworks.org.uk

Forces Families Jobs Forces Families Jobs is the go-to place for training, employment and volunteer roles for family members of current serving UK military personnel.
www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk



THE IMPACT OF MILITARY LIFE ON FAMILIES

Military life presents challenges and opportunities that affect not only service members but also their immediate families, who play a crucial role in supporting continued service. Research highlights the importance of family in facilitating a smooth transition to civilian life, however, their contributions often go unrecognised, leading to overlooked needs.

Veterans and their families frequently face difficulties during this transition, including the loss of the structured military environment, challenges in finding suitable civilian employment, and navigating complex benefits and healthcare systems. Additionally, families may experience feelings of isolation from civilian communities and the loss of their close-knit, military support network, making the adjustment even more challenging.

Helpful resources

Army Families Federation The Army Families Federation (AFF) is a strong independent voice for Service personnel and their families.
01264 554004
www.aff.org.uk

Ripple Pond Supporting adult family members of physical or psychologically injured British Armed Forces personnel and veterans.
0333 900 1028
www.theripplepond.org

Winston's Wish A charity that helps children, teenagers and young adults find their feet when their worlds have been turned upside down by grief.
08088 020 021
www.winstonswish.org



ARMED FORCES CONNECT

Armed Forces Connect is a quick and effective way to support your local Armed Forces Community and meet your duty of 'due regard' under the Armed Forces Act 2021.

The Forces Connect App links users and national organisations offering help and support across a wide range of services. From crisis support to searching for an NHS dentist, starting a business to advice on housing.

The app supports the entire Armed Forces Community - serving (Regular and Reserve), former service and their families.

Now available online via www.forcesconnect.co.uk or download from your app store via the QR code.



Forces Connect is a free UK-wide mobile app that signposts members of our armed forces community to support and advice.

Download it by searching **Forces Connect** in the Apple app or Google Play store.

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST



DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL ARMED FORCES LEAD



Neil Chester

neil.chester@dover.gov.uk

01304 872481

Armed Forces Champion

communitycovenant@dover.gov.uk

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

Kent Police Forcer Protocol

The Forcer Protocol is a tool used by us to ensure key information is available when we are searching for service veterans who are lost or have gone missing. Registration required.

www.safeandfoundonline.co.uk

Registration

www.safeandfoundonline.co.uk/register.php





**PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE
ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY
ACROSS THE DOVER DISTRICT**

Services and businesses in this booklet are not endorsed by Dover District Council.
All information in this booklet was correct at the time of going to print January 2025.