

# Housing advice for people leaving the armed forces



Housing options in Birmingham

**We are committed to helping those men and women who defend the realm.**

**This leaflet contains advice about the range of housing options and services available to you when you are leaving the armed forces:**

- Army
- Navy
- Air Force
- Royal Marines.

It also explains how you can access further information to help you manage what can be a difficult time of change.

We recognise that long term accommodation is important for people being discharged from the armed forces. We award housing needs points to reflect the fact that you have to move quickly. We also offer services to help you manage the move back to civilian life.

Birmingham City Council works in partnership with registered social landlords (RSLs) who have properties for rent across the city.

The council allocates its empty properties through a choice based lettings scheme called Birmingham Home Choice. The scheme is a partnership between the council and other Registered Social Landlords.

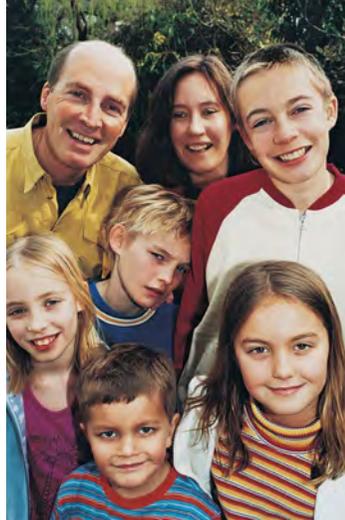
Properties are advertised at [www.birminghamhomechoice.org.uk](http://www.birminghamhomechoice.org.uk) each week. You will need to tell us which properties you are interested in. When you join the scheme, we send you a user guide, which explains how the scheme works.



*Councillor John Lines  
Cabinet Member  
for Housing*

# tents

## Contents



	Page
<b>1.</b> Who qualifies	4
<b>2.</b> How to apply	4
<b>3.</b> The information we need from you	5
<b>4.</b> How we assess applications	5
<b>5.</b> Your housing options	6
<b>6.</b> Making sure you get the right home	6
<b>7.</b> Helping you move home	7
<b>8.</b> Your responsibilities	7
<b>9.</b> Frequently asked questions	9
<b>10.</b> Other useful contacts for housing advice	10
<b>11.</b> Useful organisations	12
<b>12.</b> Neighbourhood offices	14



# 1. Who qualifies

To benefit from the higher priority we give to ex-armed forces personnel with a Birmingham connection, you need to have:

- a date of discharge within the next six months or have been discharged within the last six months
- a copy of your discharge papers or a suitable letter from your Commanding Officer
- a copy of your Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy a Service Families Quarter, if appropriate
- a local connection with Birmingham, by either having:
  - lived in Birmingham for at least six months immediately before joining the armed forces
  - lived in Birmingham for at least three of the five years immediately before joining the armed forces

- employment or full time training in the city, that is not temporary, which can be verified
- close family members living in the city, for example parents, brothers and sisters or children who have been resident in the area for a period of at least five years at the date of the application
- served in the armed forces and been based in Birmingham.
- no connection to any other area.

# 2. How to apply

As soon as you have the relevant discharge papers, you should ask for a housing application form from any neighbourhood office in Birmingham. You can also get a form by telephoning **0121 303 4125** or visiting [www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home)

We have a dedicated team to help you with your housing application.

Return your completed form to them at: Allocations, Birmingham Home Choice, PO Box 16387, Birmingham B2 2AU. Or call them on **0121 464 7246**.

The earlier you apply for housing, the longer we have to find you suitable accommodation.



### 3. The information we need from you

With your application, please attach copies of your 'ex-forces summary information' sheet, discharge papers or suitable letter from your Commanding Officer and Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy a Service Families Quarter, if appropriate.

The application form also tells you what details should be included in each section and what type of evidence will be accepted to support your application. It is important that you provide this promptly to prevent delay in processing your application.

Further information to help you complete the housing application form can be found in the leaflet **'Applying for council housing in Birmingham: a guide for applicants'**. Find this leaflet on our website at: [www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home)

### 4. How we assess applications

Once we have received your completed form with the supporting documents, we will check the details you have provided. This is to make sure you meet the requirements for



Birmingham's housing register. Your housing needs will then be calculated based on the details you have provided and you will be awarded a number of 'housing need points' to reflect your circumstances.

If your application is accepted onto the housing register, we will send you a 'registration certificate' with your own unique reference number. Please keep this as evidence of your acceptance, as it also provides details about your application.

The registration certificate also contains your user ID and PIN number. You will need these to use Birmingham Home Choice.

You will need to quote your reference number when you contact the housing team.

## 5. Your housing options

To help you to make the right choice and meet your individual needs, we can provide you with relevant information about housing options, such as:

- the supply of and demand for council homes in different parts of the city
- properties adapted for people with disabilities
- Birmingham Home Choice – the choice based lettings scheme that enables you to bid for properties you are interested in
- how to access accommodation from housing associations
- homes in the private sector
- low-cost home ownership
- what to do if you become homeless



- what tenancy support services are available
- housing for people over 50.

Call our dedicated team for advice on **0121 464 7246**, or arrange a housing options interview at your local neighbourhood office, where an adviser can talk through your options. You can arrange an interview by calling **0121 303 1111** or contacting your nearest neighbourhood office.

## 6. Making sure you get the right home

The size and make-up of your household will help us to work out the types of property you could bid for. For example:

- **a single person** can normally bid for any type of one-bedroom or studio property, although there are some specialist providers of accommodation for former armed-forces personnel who may consider you for a two-bedroom property, such as Haig Homes (see page 12)
- **a couple with one child** can bid for any type of two-bedroom property.



## Choosing the right area

There is a huge demand for social housing across the city, so it helps to be flexible about where you would like to live. Some areas of the city have limited social housing and a high demand for housing, which means you may wait longer for a home there.

To make it easy to search for a particular area, the city is divided into five zones. Birmingham Home Choice allows you to view and bid on properties in any area of the city, so you may want to look at different areas to live in.

For more information about what type of property you will be eligible for and areas of the city you are not familiar with, call our dedicated team on **0121 464 7246** or visit your local neighbourhood office. A summary of the council's allocations policy is available on our website at:

[www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home)

## 7. Helping you move home

Once your accommodation has been arranged, you may be eligible to receive support from our **Housing Support Service**, to help you settle in.



This may include:

- assistance with benefits claims
- advice on managing your money
- advice and help with buying furniture
- information about the area you are moving to
- links to training and job opportunities.

A leaflet about the details of the scheme and how to apply is available at all neighbourhood offices and on our website. To find out more or request a leaflet, telephone **0121 303 3711** or visit [www.birmingham.gov.uk/housing-support](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/housing-support)

## 8. Your responsibilities

It takes time to find suitable accommodation, so the sooner you start the application, understand the process and gather the supporting documents we need, the better.

## Keep us informed

Once you have been accepted onto the housing register, it is important to tell us if there are any changes that will affect your application such as a change of:

- address
- contact details
- family size
- health issues.

A 'change of circumstances form' is available from any neighbourhood office or our website at [www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/finding-a-home). This will ensure that you have the correct number of housing points and means that we can contact you to invite you to view properties.

It is also important that you tell us if you have made your own arrangements for housing and no longer need to be on the housing register. We can then cancel your housing application.

## Provide us with evidence when we ask for it

We need to see a range of documents to support your application so that we can check your eligibility for accommodation in Birmingham and make sure that we award you the correct level of points. This may be at the initial application stage, but also if there are any changes to your application.

**Please note:** it is a criminal offence to give false information to get a property that you are not entitled to. We will take legal action on any false applications made.

## Make sure you understand and follow your Conditions of Tenancy

When you are allocated a property, we will explain the Conditions of Tenancy. Please take time to read through them and understand your responsibilities. If you fail to meet these conditions, you could lose your home.



**You must:**

- keep up with your regular rent payments
- not be a nuisance to your neighbours
- not cause damage to the property.

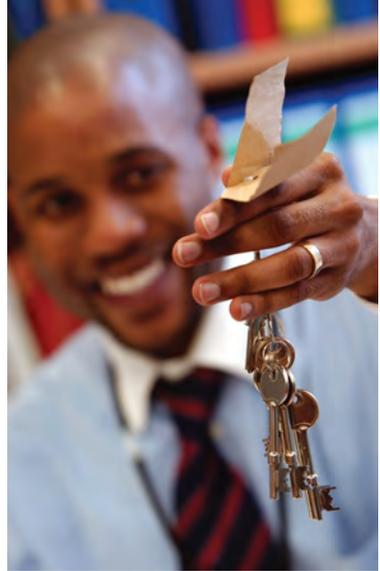
## 9. Frequently asked questions

### What if I have no connection with Birmingham?

You can still apply to go on the housing register. However, you would not be entitled to the level of points that we award to ex-armed forces personnel with a local connection.

### What if I plan to leave the forces more than six months in the future?

We cannot consider your application as a person leaving the armed forces until you have your discharge papers. However, to help you make future plans, you can get advice and information about what help may be available to you when you leave.



### What if a member of my family has special housing needs?

The housing application form will ask you for details about you and your family's needs and health issues.

There is also a section that allows you to give further information about your circumstances and requirements.

We may also ask for more information so that we clearly understand your needs, and we will discuss options with you.

## What should I do if I become homeless before an offer of accommodation is available?

Depending on your circumstances, the housing service may be able to help you find temporary accommodation. You should go to your nearest neighbourhood office for help, as soon as you can. If you become homeless out-of-office hours, you can contact a 24-hour helpline on 0121 303 2296.

## 10. Other useful contacts for housing advice

Birmingham City Council has a network of local neighbourhood offices across the city and also works with a number of organisations to increase the housing options available for applicants who are leaving the armed forces.

## Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service

The neighbourhood offices can offer you help and advice on:

- information and access to council and local services
- maximising your income
- becoming involved in making decisions that affect you.

The Contact Birmingham helpline will also deal with any queries. You can contact them by telephoning 0121 303 1111 or emailing [adviceline@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:adviceline@birmingham.gov.uk)

You can also contact other organisations to find out more about accommodation and help they can offer you. (See page 12.)



## Who else can I contact for advice?

These organisations can be contacted directly at any time. They can help you with making plans for your discharge from the armed forces.



## Organisation

## Telephone

The Royal British Legion  
Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency

0845 772 5725  
0800 169 2277

### Army

Army Benevolent Fund  
Regimental/Corps/Home Headquarters  
can be contacted via SSAFA (see page 12).

0845 241 4820

0845 130 0975

### Royal Navy

Royal Naval Benevolent Trust  
Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society  
Seamen's Hospital Society

02392 690 112

01737 353 763

020 8858 3696

### Royal Air Force

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund

0207 580 8343 /

0800 169 2942

0116 2166 5224



# 11: Useful organisations and schemes

Organisation	Contact details
<p><b>Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)</b></p> <p>This service provides housing information and advice to service personnel. In some cases they are also able to find suitable accommodation.</p>	<p>Telephone: <b>01980 618925</b> Email: <b>lf-jshao-mailbox@mod.uk</b> Website: <b>www.mod.uk/defenceinternet/defencefor/servicecommunity/housing</b></p>
<p><b>Single Persons Accommodation Centre for Ex-Services (SPACES)</b></p> <p>This is an accommodation placement centre for single service leavers seeking civilian housing.</p>	<p>Address: The Beacon, Marne Road, Catterick Garrison, Catterick, North Yorkshire, DL9 3AU Telephone: <b>01748 833 797 or 01748 872 940</b> Website: <b>www.spaces.org.uk</b></p>
<p><b>Haig Homes</b></p> <p>This housing provider has a range of property types in various locations around the country, although there are very limited properties available for single people.</p>	<p>Telephone: <b>020 8685 5777</b> <i>(answerphone outside office hours)</i> Fax: <b>020 8685 5778</b> Email: <b>haig@haighomes.org.uk</b> Website: <b>www.haighomes.org.uk</b></p>
<p><b>Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)</b></p> <p>Offers practical and personal welfare support. This can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• financial assistance and advice</li><li>• training</li><li>• residential care</li><li>• short term accommodation for separated families</li></ul>	<p>Address: 19 Queen Elizabeth Street, London, SE1 2LP Telephone: <b>0845 130 0975</b> Website: <b>www.ssafa.org.uk</b></p>

Organisation	Contact details
<p><b>Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)</b>            For general advice on a wide range of subjects. You can find out where your nearest CAB office is by calling the national Citizens Advice Bureaux office.</p>	<p>Telephone: <b>08444 771 010</b>            Website:  <b>www.adviceguide.org.uk</b></p>
<p><b>Shelterline</b>            Provides emergency advice 24 hours a day for anyone in housing difficulty.</p>	<p>Freephone: <b>0808 800 4444</b></p>
<p><b>Crisis Smartmove</b>            Crisis Smartmove offers a bond scheme for people aged 18 years or over, who are homeless or about to be homeless and are on a low income, with little or no savings.</p> <p>They may be able to pay a private landlord the first four weeks' rent in advance, based on an individual's entitlement to housing benefit, which would have to be paid back once the housing benefit begins. The service also helps people put in claims for housing benefit.</p>	<p>Telephone: <b>0800 038 4838</b>            Email: <b>enquiries@crisis.org.uk</b>            Website: <b>www.crisis.org.uk</b></p>
<p><b>Ladywood Furniture Project</b>            This project is part of the Furniture Recycling Network. They can assist people who have been referred to them by a support officer with furniture and small electrical items. There is a small charge, but once arrangements have been made by the support officer, applicants can visit the scheme and choose from refurbished items available.</p>	<p>Address: 48 Eyre Street,            Birmingham, B18 7AA.            Telephone: <b>0121 455 7133</b></p>

# 12: Neighbourhood offices

Birmingham City Council has a network of neighbourhood offices across the city.

You will need to make an appointment if you would like to speak to an adviser – call **0121 216 3030** or email **advice@birmingham.gov.uk**.

Or contact our dedicated Armed Forces team on **0121 464 7246**.

## Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



**If you would like this booklet in large print,  
Braille or on audio CD, please call 0121 675 5779.**