

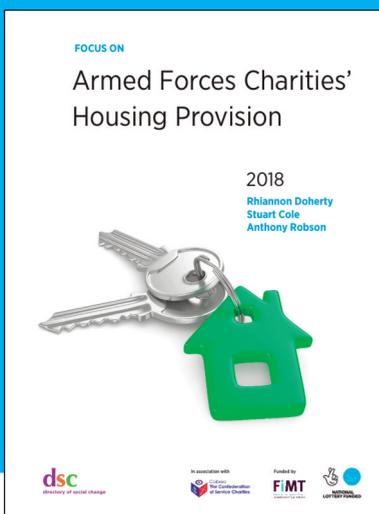
Armed Forces Charities' Housing Provision

Access to sustainable housing has a huge impact on quality of life. Without a fixed address it can be extremely difficult to gain employment, stay healthy, maintain relationships or even open a bank account.

Previous research has generally found that the vast majority of Service leavers transition smoothly to civilian life and secure appropriate housing (Bevan M., et al, 2018). Rates of homelessness in the ex-Service community have also been found to be relatively low.

However, for approximately 11,600 individuals per year, charities provide around £40 million of vital housing support. DSC's latest research shows that there is a huge variety of support on offer, which ranges from help with housing applications, to beds in shelters, to long-term family homes.

DSC's research illuminates the vital work of the armed forces charity sector. For the first time, this report provides a comprehensive overview of housing support delivered by forces charities.



Methodology

- DSC maintains a database containing information on over 1,200 armed forces charities.
- To identify forces charities which make provision for housing, researchers conducted searches of DSC's database in addition to three charity regulator websites: Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW); Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR); Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI).
- Data was gathered via extensive examination of annual accounts, website content and charity regulator information.
- To bolster our data, DSC also conducted a survey which achieved a 48.8% response rate.
- Cobseo's Directory of Housing and Support Services for Veterans was also used to supplement the data where possible, and avoid duplication.

Key findings

Level of provision

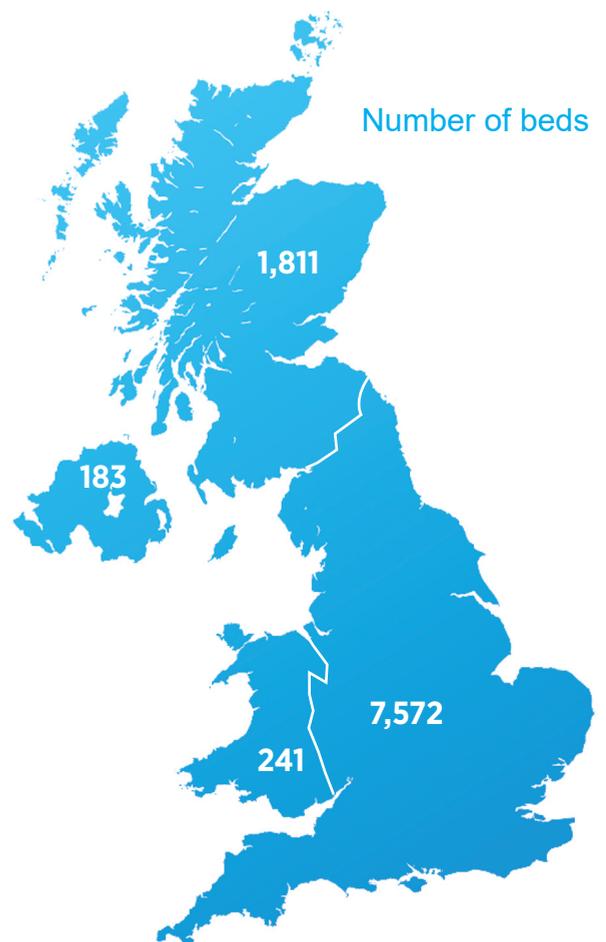
In total, 78 charities were identified as delivering housing provision, which represents around 6.5% of all armed forces charities in the UK. During the previous year, at least 11,600 beneficiaries accessed housing services and forces charities spent at least £40 million delivering housing support.

Range of services

In total, 47 forces charities provide accommodation, delivering over 10,200 'beds' or units of accommodation throughout the UK. Initial analysis suggests that accommodation provision is unevenly spread, with almost three-quarters (74%) of all beds located in England.

The most common types of accommodation schemes delivered by charities were adapted housing and subsidized housing (delivered by 58% and 56% of charities respectively). Charities often delivered highly directed or specialist housing services which catered for specific beneficiary groups: 43% of charities provided housing for beneficiaries who were wounded, injured or sick (WIS), or disabled; 34% offered accommodation for homeless beneficiaries; and 19% managed housing for elderly people.

Housing provision extended beyond bricks and mortar, with charities offering a wide range of support services which helped beneficiaries to find and maintain a home. The most commonly provided was home repairs and maintenance, delivered by 43% of charities. This was followed by signposting (39%) and help with house searches and applications (38%).



'On behalf of the Cluster, we are delighted to endorse and commend this report for anyone who wants to help homeless veterans. We are very happy to support the recommendations made by the report and we take pride in leading on ever-deeper collaboration between veterans' housing providers.'

Ed Tytherleigh and James Richardson
Co-Chairs, Cobseo Housing Cluster

Collaboration

Charities were more likely to partner with fellow forces charities than mainstream charities (73% vs 37% of charities respectively). Over one-third (36%) of charities partnered with local authorities, but fewer partnered with the MOD and housing associations (17% and 18% of charities respectively).



73%

73% partnered with other forces charities



37%

37% partnered with non-forces charities



36%

36% partnered with local authorities

A bloated sector?

The armed forces charities sector often comes under fire for having too many charities. However, of the approximately 1,200 armed forces charities registered in the UK, only 6.5% make provision for housing.

When analysed further, DSC found small pockets of charities providing specialist provision. For example, twenty charities catered solely to disabled or WIS beneficiaries, nine managed sheltered living for elderly beneficiaries and five operated shelters for homeless ex-Service personnel.

Foster collaboration

Collaboration emerged as a key theme of this report – charities frequently cited it as an aspect of best practice and 92.3% of survey respondents reported experiencing of benefits of partnership. Initiatives such as the Cobseo Housing Cluster and the Veterans' Housing Advice Office serve as great examples of collaboration.

Yet partnerships with other housing providers such as the MOD and housing associations were less common, which indicates that perhaps more could be done to encourage cross-sector collaboration.

Assess regional housing needs

Further research on armed forces population density, as well as differences in housing legalisation and policy across devolved regions, is urgently needed. This data would help charities to identify priority areas for service provision and determine whether current housing provision is meeting need. It could also help to confirm whether areas outside of England suffer from a shortfall of accommodation (as 74% of total beds were located in England).

More frontline data collection on the homeless ex-Service population could help charities identify and respond to rough sleepers outside of London. Existing research is small in scale and London-focused. (Jones et al 2014; Homeless Link, 2013; Johnsen et al., 2008; National Audit Office, 2007)



About the report

DSC's armed forces research continues to be generously funded by Forces in Mind Trust.

The authors would like to thank all charities which provided invaluable information during the data-collection phase of the project.

Special thanks go to the Cobseo Housing Cluster, Stoll, Haig Housing, The Scottish Veterans' Garden City Association, Army Families Federation, ABF The Soldiers Charity and RAF Benevolent Fund for their support during the writing process

This publication is the fourth of six thematic reports, to be delivered during 2017-19 as part of DSC's Focus On series, which explores the work of the armed forces charity sector.

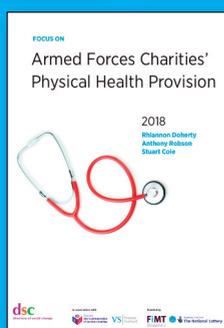
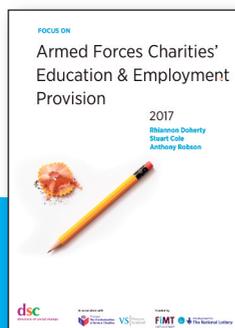
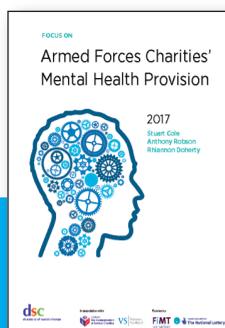
The series follows on from DSC's two Sector Insight reports: UK Armed Forces Charities, 2014 and Armed Forces Charities in Scotland, 2016.



Follow us on twitter:

@dsc_charity or @forcescharities

Download other reports in the series

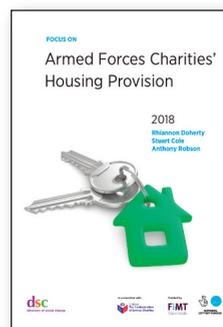


About DSC

The Directory of Social Change (DSC) has a vision of an independent voluntary sector at the heart of social change.

We help independent charities, voluntary organisations and community groups to achieve their goals by:

- Providing practical tools that organisations and activists need, including publications, training courses, conferences and research
- Acting as a 'concerned citizen' in public policy debates, leading campaigns and stimulating debate on key policy issues
- Carrying out research and providing information to influence policymakers



To download the report visit:
www.armedforcescharities.org.uk

To download other reports in the series and learn more about the project visit:
www.armedforcescharities.org.uk

To find out more about the Directory of Social Change, visit:
www.dsc.org.uk/research

Please submit any research enquiries to Stuart Cole, Research Manager at:
scole@dsc.org.uk