

Study finds some councils in London let down homeless veterans

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Left to right, those shown are Jim Blake, London VAPC vice-chairman and an Army Veteran; Lynn Verity, chairman of London VAPC; report authors Professor Helen Carr and Dr. Edward Kirton-Darling from Kent Law School, University of Kent. Credit: Paul Clabburn, London region, Veterans' Advisory and Pensions Committee

In the case of Barnet and Kensington & Chelsea, their allocations policies don't comply with the law which provides for particular duties towards veterans and their families. Barnet is amending its Housing Allocations Scheme to reflect the changes highlighted in the report, to be in place before Christmas and Kensington & Chelsea has stated it is updating its policy early in the New Year.

The London Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC) commissioned Professor Helen Carr and Dr Ed Kirton-Darling of Kent Law School to carry out a new study of homelessness among veterans. It found the current law is too complex and does not work. They call on the Mayor of London to announce an Armed Forces Champion to help coordinate the improvement of services for veterans.

Changes in the law between 2002 and 2012 made it a legal duty for councils to assist vulnerable homeless veterans and to make it easier for veterans to get onto the register for social housing, while a decision of the Supreme Court in 2015 should have made the test of vulnerability easier to meet for veterans.

In their report, Professor Carr and Dr Kirton-Darling say clarity is needed on the test for vulnerability. They also present examples of good and poor provision across London and make recommendations for all local authorities to improve the circumstances of homeless veterans. Barnet and Kensington & Chelsea are recommended to revise their allocations policies to comply with the 2012 legislative requirements. Islington, Kensington & Chelsea and Waltham Forest are recommended to improve their online application systems, which could currently exclude veterans at a pre-application stage.

They find that [local authorities](#) should:

- State that former members of the armed services will be in

priority need if they are vulnerable as a result of having served in the regular armed forces.

- Ask applicants if they have a Service history and this should be recorded.
- Provide clear information online about what information might assist a homeless application by a former member of the armed services.
- Ensure that housing officers know how to check for service records.
- Review their homelessness strategies, including specific consideration of homelessness amongst [veterans](#).
- Ensure that staff are aware of the up to date law.
- Review their online systems to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

The study builds on existing research, in particular a University of York report, which highlighted the need for more evidence about the problem.

Provided by University of Kent

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