

ARMED FORCES COVENANT SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW

Community Connections



Introduction

This briefing sets out the key updates from works aligned to Armed Forces Covenant around Housing in the City

Housing Register – Devon Home Choice

The Armed Forces Covenant in Plymouth says:

Supporting servicemen/women and ex-servicemen/women to secure suitable accommodation

- The Council will offer suitable advice to Armed Forces applicants who present in Plymouth so they are able to access affordable housing in the City
- Accepting the UK Armed Forces Veteran ID Cards as proof of a Veteran.
- The Council will offer preference for those requiring social housing who are currently in the Armed Forces or leaving the forces.
- The Council will allocate a proportion of stock through local lettings plans for Armed Forces applicants.

Assisting with requests for adapted homes for wounded soldiers.

- Those living in a Plymouth Social Housing property can be direct matched to a suitable property where there is a medical need.
- The Council will offer relevant advice and support to injured veterans to help them access home improvements.

We make provision for veterans and their families in the Devon Home Choice policy that helps meet their needs:

- Preference that upgrades households from band D to band C
- Exemption from 'deliberate worsening of circumstances'
- Disregarding of lump sums
- The Devon Home Choice policy does not apply local connection restrictions for those who are in or leaving the armed forces

Affordable Housing Delivery

We worked with partners to deliver the award winning Nelson Project which provided 24 flats including 6 for people with Learning Difficulties and successfully homed 12 single veterans in housing need who also received training while working on the build. £450,000 grant funding was provided by PCC and we provided the site at no cost.

We are currently delivering the Stirling Project which replicates the Nelson Project but also includes veterans with families and delivers a mix of houses and flats. PCC obtained £375,000 Land Release funding for the scheme which, together with £325,000 from PCC's Plan for Homes fund was used to purchase the adjoining NHS Clinic and to demolish both the Clinic and the council's former residential home. This included removing widespread asbestos contamination from the land.

The land was released to Housing Association partner Livewest in Feb 2021 and work on site started a few months later with the first homes being occupied later this year. The project will deliver 25 affordable homes including a 4 bed wheelchair adapted house and up to 12 veterans are involved in building their own homes while receiving training, which will allow them to obtain employment in the construction industry. An interview with one of the veterans can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qxf5nkfVEhQ>

We are also working with another partner RP on a new development on Council owned land where it is proposed that some of the homes will be subject to a Local Lettings Policy which prioritises lets to veterans in housing need. £90,000 Land Release funding has been secured towards abnormal costs on the site.