

Homelessness among UK armed forces veterans rises by 14%

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Members of the British Armed Forces 16 Air Assault Brigade walk to the air terminal after disembarking a Royal Air Force Voyager at RAF Brize Norton, west of London on August 29, 2021. (Photo by AFP)

London, December 31 (RHC)-- New data has revealed that the number of homeless military veterans in the United Kingdom has risen by 14 percent the last year, amid soaring costs of living across the country.

According to figures from the Department of Housing released on Wednesday, 2,110 households with someone who served in the armed forces were assessed as homeless in 2022-23, up from 1,850 last year.

Labor analysis of the figures suggests that 500 veterans' households are being made homeless every three months. This month, it was also revealed that one in three service personnel were living in grade-four single living accommodation, the lowest rating given by the Ministry of Defense.

England is enduring a homelessness crisis, with the number of people living in temporary accommodation in England at a 25 year high amid high inflation coupled with a severe cost of living crisis. This is despite the fact that the government has announced more than £8.5 million of funding in order to ensure no veteran should sleep rough this Christmas, and veteran homelessness is ended in 2023.

The funding will deliver services in more than 900 housing units in the country, where specialist help for veterans, including with health, education, and employment needs are provided.

The money will also allow for the establishment of a new referral scheme, called Op Fortitude, which will enable veterans at risk of homelessness to access supported housing and wrap-around specialist care in health, housing, and education.

Earlier this year, Minister for Veterans' Affairs Johnny Mercer said "No one, not least those who have served this country, should be homeless," stressing that "as a government we remain steadfastly committed to ending veteran homelessness in 2023." He also noted that if former soldiers were still homeless by the end of 2023, he would "want to know why... [as] we've gone out, secured the money, designed the programs ... I've worked hard on this".

In an op-ed for LBC radio's website on Thursday, Mercer explained that 400 veterans had been housed through the scheme. However, he added, the government must do more to spread this support throughout the country.

Steve McCabe, Shadow Minister for Veterans has criticized the government, saying "After 13 years of Conservative failure, ministers have created a postcode lottery for veterans, and halved employment support, and more veterans are homeless this year than last year."

England is facing a homelessness crisis, with the number of people living in temporary accommodation in England at a 25-year high. Recent estimates have suggested that around 130,000 former soldiers across the UK are homeless.

The homelessness crisis in England comes on the heels of a mortgage crisis which has been brewing for some time.

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