



# Irish Defence Forces Veteran's Charter

The primary function of Government is the protection and defence of its citizens. Óglaigh na hÉireann, the Irish Defence Forces, fulfil that role on behalf of Government. In doing so, they sacrifice some civilian freedoms, face danger and have suffered serious injury and death in serving the State and its citizens. Members of the Irish Defence Forces remain the only individuals who swear an oath of Allegiance to Ireland and the Constitution. In return for this allegiance and service, the veterans our Army, Air Corps, Naval Service and their families deserve respect, support and fair treatment upon their discharge from service.

Such respect, support and fair treatment involves all of Irish society: Government, State Bodies, Private Business and Organisations and Citizens in recognising and valuing those men and women who have selflessly performed military duties and acted in aid to the civil powers.

Who are the Irish Defence Forces Veterans Family?

They include:

- Former Members of the Irish Defence Forces
- Former Members of the Irish Reserve Defence Forces
- Families of Former Members

What is the Irish Defence Forces Veteran's Charter?

The Veterans Charter represents a set of commitments that Veterans can expect from Government, the State, Business and Citizens in recognition of the unique circumstances of their armed service to the nation. It represents tangible commitments to assist Veterans in their transition to civilian life having regard to the unique circumstances and characteristics that apply to military service and allegiance to Ireland and the Constitution. The Charter will assist our 'citizens in uniform' transition to citizens who retain their military values of allegiance and service to the nation.

The Veterans Charter aims to encourage Government and the Community to support, recognise, respect and assist those who have served Ireland through their military service and to honour their loyalty, commitment and sacrifice in delivering that service to the nation. It will assist in identifying and securing resources to support the services and needs of the Irish veteran community including employment, health and well-being, educational opportunity and the provision of societal benefits to encourage the continued service of Irish Defence Forces Veterans to their country and their local community.

Scope of the Irish Defence Forces Veterans Charter

1. Provision of a dedicated person within each military formation to deal with those preparing for discharge and their subsequent needs as veterans. The provision of a single point of contact to provide independent and confidential information, advice and advocacy in respect of social and public services including employment, housing, social welfare, medical and health and educational needs.
2. Pension arrangements for veterans vary considerably depending on service and date on commencement of service. For example, NCOs who commenced service post 1994 and who are in receipt of Tech Pay for specialist functions are required to retire at age 50 but do not receive any pension until they are aged 60. All those who serve in our Defence Forces should be entitled to a pension on completion of 21 years' service. This pension should be payable upon discharge. There should be a uniformity of pension entitlement.
3. Pension Abatement currently applies to all veterans who commenced service in the Irish defence Forces post 2012. Apart from the fact that there appears to be no legal basis for the abatement of the pension of any individual who has a legal right to such a pension, it only applies to those who, following military service, take up employment in the public sector. Those who take up employment in the private sector continue to receive their full pension. This is discriminatory. It results in an effective barrier to public employment for those who have had significant public resources invested in their education and training, often in key specialist disciplines. Their training and skills are being lost to the State. It make no sense for the State to invest so much in military personnel only to encourage those personnel to provide their expertise to Non-State employers upon discharge. This is particularly the case in circumstances where State Sector Employers often find it difficult to recruit specialist personnel. Pension abatement must be ended.
4. Pension on promotion for those who commenced their military service pre-2012 and upon retirement take up employment in the public sector are subject to pension abatement on promotion. This must be ended. There is no justification for this. It discourages individuals from seeking to achieve promotion by providing maximum commitment to their public sector employer and effectively fails to make full use of the skills and abilities of those individuals for the State. Further, it penalises those who actively seek promotion and seek to serve the public to the maximum of their ability. This policy must be discontinued.
5. Pensions paid to veterans living abroad are currently subject to administrative charges levied on the Department of Defence by the banks. Only a relatively small number of veterans are living abroad. This practice should be discontinued and the Government, having regard to the level of State funds being handled by the Irish Banks, should request that such administrative costs be absorbed by the banks.
6. Members of the Defence Forces are subject to medical assessment and treatment by Medical Corps Doctors rather than a local GP. Military life, by definition, exerts significant physical and mental pressures on individuals, often resulting in injury, mental health problems and other ongoing medical ailments. Upon discharge, veterans should continue to be treated for medical issues and be provided with a GP Card to cover the cost of their general medical needs. In addition, Government levied prescription charges should be waived for veterans.
7. A fully comprehensive exit policy should be introduced in order that veterans can be fully prepared for civilian life. Pre-retirement courses should be available up to 1 year prior to retirement or 6 months post retirement. Such courses are essential to assist with the transition from military to civilian life and help prepare individuals for their changing circumstances and needs. Such courses should include information on housing (particularly guidance and support for applying for social or private rental accommodation), taxation, finances, training and education among others.
8. Veterans should be provided with the opportunity to undertake a training course to assist with them in finding suitable employment in civil life. This could be operated on the basis that an individual would be financially supported to undertake a course an appropriate training course of their choice up to a maximum value.
9. A comprehensive and recorded medical examination should be given to all members of the Defence Forces prior to discharge. This medical assessment should record injuries or medical issues resulting from service.
10. Fully completed LA89 discharge book, as required by Regulation, must be provided at the date of discharge. This document represents a record of a veteran's military service and is a key document when seeking civilian employment. The discharge book should be updated as the current design is not fit for purpose. It should also include a photo of the member concerned.
11. A National Veterans ID card, with photo, should be issued to all members upon their discharge from the Defence Forces. Existing veterans to be issued with the ID card on a rolling basis. Loss or theft of the card to be reported to the single point of contact (1 above). Replacement card to attract a €10 administration fee.
12. Local Property Tax reductions should be afforded to veterans in recognition for the service provided by them to their local communities and communities throughout Ireland.
13. Recognition of all Veterans Associations should be a right not a privilege. There are many Veterans Associations, Unit Associations, Battalion Associations, Corps and Regimental Associations. These Associations play a key role in the lives of veterans and their families. All should be recognised, encouraged and supported. The current White paper on Defence (August 2015) should be amended (7.7 Veterans Policy, Pg 84) to reflect the recognition of all Associations. The White Paper only recognises two individual bodies. This is divisive and undermines all other Veterans Associations and fails to recognise and appreciate all the hard work that other Associations do for veterans and their local communities.  
Veterans Committee should be established with the sole purpose of dealing with veterans welfare and support. This Committee should comprise of one member from each of the Veterans Associations and a serving member of the Defence Forces so that each Association has equal representation on behalf of their members and equal access to information flow from the Defence Forces. This Committee will feed into the work of each Formation's single point of contact.
14. A Defence Forces Discount Scheme whereby Veterans can avail of reduced cost goods and services is a feature in many countries throughout the world at both national and local levels. Such a scheme should be introduced by Government, starting perhaps with companies in the Semi-State sector whilst inviting and lobbying private sector organisations to provide discounts or other special recognition to Irish Defence Force Veterans as an acknowledgement and sign of respect for their allegiance and service to the nation.
15. A National Veterans Day should be declared. This day will be a day whereby the State and its citizens remember and honour those who have selflessly served in the Irish Defence Forces since the foundation of the State. Veterans should be encouraged and facilitated to hold local and national public parades. The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces should support and participate in such parades as they will not only honour veterans but will help in increasing the profile of Óglaigh na hÉireann publicly and the work they undertake at home and abroad.
16. A dedicated office be established by the Department of Defence to co-ordinate the implementation of the Veterans Charter and produce an annual progress report. The Charter should be reviewed and amended as necessary every 5 years by the Veterans Associations and the Military Authorities for presentation to the Minister for Defence and Government.

on behalf of the National Executive Committee of Irish Defence Forces Veterans Association  
For all Defence Forces Veterans of Ireland