NEWS

Six fresh starts: new Devizes home offers veterans experiencing homelessness a route to independence

Stone Circle are proud to have partnered with Alabaré, opening Devizes' first home for veterans experiencing homelessness. The milestone marks our fifth project together, providing former service personnel a safe place to live and rebuild their lives.



On Tuesday September 22nd, Stone Circle gathered with our valued partners Alabaré for the, much-anticipated, ribbon cutting ceremony of the first home in Devizes for veterans experiencing homelessness. It marks our fifth project with the charity since we began working together in 2021.

Among those at the ceremony was a local veteran who had served 22 years in the Army before finding himself sleeping in his car. He will soon move into one of the home's six rooms.

> *"I felt as if I couldn't move forward, but now I can," a local veteran, who will be one of the six occupants, told ITV News. "I feel as if a burden has been taken off my shoulders."*

The property is the first of its kind in Devizes. This brings the number of veterans' homes in Wiltshire to four, supporting up to 22 former military personnel. The home is open to veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, however long ago they served, and residents do not need a local connection to Devizes.

Stronger Together

As a long-standing partner of the charity, Stone Circle play a critical role in supporting the work Alabaré does. Through owning properties and leasing them to the charity, our teams work together to prepare the home for use, providing safe environments for people to call home.

Partnerships like this are at the heart of what we do. Our values are community driven, whereby working with organisations such as Alabaré means those homes can offer people not just somewhere to live, but the support to build a more secure future.



Tackling a Challenge

Homelessness in England is at or near record levels, with around 135,000 households in temporary accommodation and a record number of people sleeping rough last autumn. Prime Minister Andy Burnham has pledged to end rough sleeping, starting with a national drive to

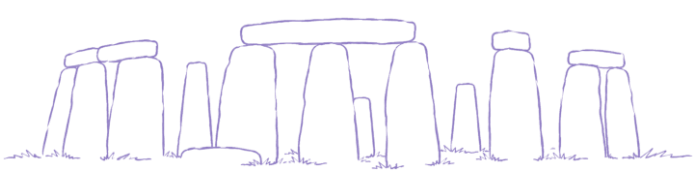
offer everyone a route off the streets by Christmas, a commitment welcomed by our organisations while warning it would be a challenge to deliver.

Veterans often become homeless through mental health difficulties, relationship breakdown or a lack of affordable housing, yet many never take up the support available to them, and Alabaré has seen a 21% year-on-year rise in demand for its services. That is why the property offers far more than a bed. It provides person-centred support throughout each resident's stay, from sorting Universal Credit to education, training and practical life skills, helping to improve veterans' mental and physical wellbeing. Residents typically stay just over a year before moving on to more permanent, independent living.

Since it began in 1991, when a vicar and his wife took a homeless man into their home, Alabaré has grown to a portfolio of 80 houses, including 90 spaces for veterans, and has supported around 2,500 people. Stone Circle are proud to have played a part in that growth, providing homes for the charity since our partnership began in 2021.

For us, projects like this are what being a purpose-led housing company is all about. By working openly with partners such as these, we make sure the homes we provide reach those who need them most, including veterans who might otherwise fall through the gaps, and help build stronger, more inclusive communities across Wiltshire.

> *"It's been a pleasure working with Alabaré seeing meaningful project such as this come to life. Making an active and positive impact within the community is incredibly rewarding and something we continue to work towards. We're particularly proud to have supported the veteran community, particularly due to their strong connections here in Wiltshire." – Hayley Stockham, Group Director at Stone Circle*



Looking Forward

Stone Circle is proud to be part of an incredible and growing work supporting homeless adults, veterans, young people, people with disabilities and mental health disorders. As part of a government programme, a network of housing, health and employment support for veterans is continuing to expand its services across the region, with another Home for Veterans opening shortly in Gloucestershire.

Having worked together on five projects since 2021, we look forward to continuing our partnership with Alabaré, and to working with others who share our commitment to providing safe, affordable homes across Wiltshire for the people who need them most.

> *"You come in every day, and you know that you are making a difference to somebody," said Faye from* Alabaré*. "The work our guys are doing in the houses is saving lives."*

