



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

# Families:

How can the Armed Forces Covenant help us?



# FAMILIES:

## How can the Armed Forces Covenant help us?

### This leaflet has been designed to...

- give you an understanding of what the Covenant means to families
- outline what support is available to families
- guide families in how to access these measures
- explain what to do if you feel disadvantaged as a result of your family member's service in the Armed Forces

### What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the relationship between the government, the Armed Forces and the Nation and aims to recognise the Service you gave and the sacrifices you were prepared to make.

Put simply, it is designed to make sure you can access services like health and housing without facing any disadvantage from your membership of the Armed Forces.

This leaflet sets out the key measures, but if you would like to find out more or read the list of commitments the government has made to support the Covenant, you can access the full report, The Armed Forces Covenant: Today and Tomorrow, at [www.mod.uk/covenant](http://www.mod.uk/covenant).

### How can the Covenant benefit me?

## Healthcare

- If you are overseas you will receive the same medical and dental care as your serving spouse or civil partner.
- We are working with the Department of Health to stop Service families losing their place on NHS waiting lists when they move due to a posting. It is very important that you tell your doctor that you are a member of the Armed Forces community.
- If you are undergoing IVF treatment and are due to be posted you can ask the chain of command to take note of your IVF treatment cycles. Whilst we can't guarantee you won't be moved for operational reasons, in most circumstances the department can look favourably on your case.
- With regards to mental health, the "Big White Wall" [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com) is a

website that provides support and information for people wanting to discuss their problems anonymously.

*For more information:*

- The Department of Health has produced a useful leaflet on healthcare for the Armed Forces and their families: [www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_091922.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_091922.pdf)

## Education

- You can apply for a school place on receipt of your posting notice.
- Schools can exceed admissions numbers to make a place available for a Service child.
- The government has introduced a new fund of £3m per year over the next four years to support state schools in catering for Service and Reservist children. This is in addition to the £200 pupil premium that your school can receive for each Service child identified on their school roll. Tell your school that your child is a Service child so they can access this.
- The MOD is developing a strategy to help children who move schools because their parents, carers or guardians are in the Armed Forces. It will look at: Service children moving schools abroad, making sure schools are aware about children moving, and giving advice and support to parents who have to attend meetings at schools, local authorities and tribunals.
- Families of personnel serving overseas are eligible for Home Fee Status and financial student support. This means they do not have to pay overseas study fees in the UK.

*For more information:*

- More information on helping children moving schools can be found here: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/Welfare/DCYP/DirectorateChildrenAndYoungPeopledcyp.htm>
- For more information on MOD support for state schools with Service children, see: [www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/PersonnelPublications/Welfare/ModSupportFundForSchoolsWithServiceChildrenGrantApplicationForm.htm](http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/PersonnelPublications/Welfare/ModSupportFundForSchoolsWithServiceChildrenGrantApplicationForm.htm)
- The Children's Education and Advisory Service (CEAS) is funded by the MOD to give information on education: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Education/ChildrensEducationAdvisoryService.htm>

## Housing

- The Department for Local government and Communities is looking at ways to improve Service families' access to social housing, and to make sure their cases are prioritised.

- The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) is improving customer care. Next year they will change the way you apply for Service Families Accommodation (SFA) to an automated service where you will be able to specify your priorities and see what housing is available.
- As part of the MOD's work to reduce the funding gap and balance Defence priorities, from April 2013 there will be a three-year pause in the programme to upgrade lower quality SFA homes. Whilst this is regrettable, 96% of Service Family Accommodation properties are now in the top two standards for condition and the MOD will continue to target efforts on the most pressing accommodation issues.
- The Direct Gov website offers advice on financial matters such as mortgages and accessing credit: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm>
- Service personnel have the highest level of priority for Affordable Housing (rented or owned accommodation that is considered affordable for people on an average UK income) and this continues on leaving. In the event of a death in Service the priority passes to the bereaved spouse or civil partner.

*For more information:*

- You can contact the Joint Service Housing Advice Office: [www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Housing](http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Housing), email: [lf-jshao-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:lf-jshao-mailbox@mod.uk), telephone: 01980 618 925

## Responsibility of Care

- We have a responsibility to make sure Service children and young people feel safe and supported in an Armed Forces environment. We do this through maintaining an effective social worker workforce and through addressing bullying, violence and abuse.
- Overseas this support is provided by the MOD; in the UK it is provided by the Local Authority.
- The MOD will ensure that all its staff who work with children and young people receive safeguarding training.
- If a member of Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) personnel has served for five years and a relationship akin to marriage has lasted at least two years, their partner and children under the age of 18 can apply for settlement in the UK.
- If a child of FCO personnel is born overseas when a parent is serving outside the UK, they can now be registered as a British citizen, as long as they are under 18. To register for citizenship you will need an MN1 application form from the Home Office, on 0117 344 1462 or 0845 010 5200).

*For more information:*

- Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) is the focal point for all matters relating to children and young people who belong to the Armed Forces community, at home and overseas. For more information see: <http://www.mod.uk/defenceinternet/aboutdefence/whatwedo/personnel/welfare/dcyp/> or email: [lf-psc-cyp-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:lf-psc-cyp-mailbox@mod.uk).

## Deployment

- During deployment Service families' welfare is catered for by the parent unit. Your local HIVE can help you with specific support – see [www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Hive/HiveSupportDuringDeployments.htm](http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Hive/HiveSupportDuringDeployments.htm)
- The Family Welfare Grant is designed to help Home Units give welfare support to families of Service personnel deployed on operations. Commanding Officers or their representatives can claim £2.20 per week for each of their deployed Service personnel who are in receipt of DWP(O). The grant includes providing communications equipment (Internet and telephone connections) for HIVEs and Community Centres, and subsidising the cost of family activities.
- Concessionary Travel for Families (CTF) lets close family visit Service personnel on long deployments. It is based on expected tour lengths.
- Each Service has a community support website with online forums where you can communicate with personnel in theatre.
- For Reservists or Service personnel who choose to live off-base, community support activities and briefings are often centred on the unit but support is available to all – simply get in touch by phone or email with the local community support team.

## Family Life

- The MOD is working to provide a better overall employment package to balance the demands placed on Service personnel (e.g. to improve family stability).
- This includes career structure, pay, allowances and accommodation policies.
- For family members wanting to get back into work the reformed Work Programme can help you, from the three month point of your claim for Jobseekers Allowance (with the agreement of the Job Centre advisor). Find out more about the Work Programme here: [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Jobseekers/programmesandservices/DG\\_197781](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Jobseekers/programmesandservices/DG_197781)
- The MOD and the single Services will redouble their efforts to make sure Local Authorities are conducting a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, taking into account the needs of Service parents and children in their area.

## Commercial Products and Services

- Accessing commercial products and services (such as mortgages, loans and credit) is normally a matter for the commercial sector, but the government does keep tabs on where problems arise and how your position can be improved.
- British Forces Post Office (BFPO) has proposed that BFPO addresses be recognised

as UK post codes. This will help with financial services, online retail and completing government online forms.

- There are commercial companies who give discounts for Service personnel and their families. You can find out about them in the Defence Discount Brochure: [www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk](http://www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk).

*For more information:*

- The Direct Gov website offers advice on financial matters: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm>
- Citizens Advice has a network of advice centres across the UK who can help on a wide range of subjects from housing and health, to debt and consumer issues. Telephone: 020 7833 2181.

## Support after Service for bereaved families

- Each of the Services gives support for next of kin and emergency contacts of deceased, missing or injured Service personnel.
- Families can stay in Service accommodation for up to two years after bereavement.
- Resettlement entitlement which a Serving person would have been entitled to is transferred to the bereaved spouse/civil partner.
- The Defence Inquests Unit (DIU) manages all inquests into the deaths of Service and MOD personnel who die on or as a result of injuries sustained during operations/training.
- The Independent Inquest Advice Service is run by the British Royal Legion and jointly funded by the MOD. It offers support to families of those who have died in service and are faced with the prospect of an inquest.
- The Bereaved Scholarship Fund provides university and further education scholarships for the children of Service personnel who have died on active duty since 1990. The aim of the scheme is to give those children a head start in life by enabling them to obtain a university degree or further education. Find more information and the application form here: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/SPVA/EducationScholarshipSchemeForBereavedServiceChildren.htm>

## Recognition

- Since 2009 Armed Forces Day has been held on the last Saturday in June.
- It is an opportunity for the Nation to show support to the Armed Forces and their families.
- In terms of medallic recognition, the Elizabeth Cross and Memorial Scroll are awarded to the next of kin of personnel who have died in Service. This is not a posthumous medal for the fallen, rather it recognises the loss suffered by Service families.

## Problems and Complaints

- Your nearest HIVE can help you direct your query or complaint to the right people.
- The three Service Families Federations are another independent and confidential service you can use for advice and support.
- For housing problems this website is a good guide in who to go to: [http://www.modernhousingsolutions.com/customer/customer\\_complaints.asp](http://www.modernhousingsolutions.com/customer/customer_complaints.asp)

*For more information:*

- If this still does not resolve the complaint, you can access the support services offered by the various Ombudsman services in the UK. See the Citizens' Advice Bureau website ombudsmen page to find out where to go next: [http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your\\_rights/civil\\_rights/how\\_to\\_use\\_an\\_ombudsman.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your_rights/civil_rights/how_to_use_an_ombudsman.htm)
- The Family Federations can be contacted through their websites. (Navy: [www.nff.org.uk](http://www.nff.org.uk). Army: [www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk), RAF: [www.raf-ff.org.uk](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk).)
- If you have attempted all the above avenues for problems and complaints and still feel the Covenant is not working for you, do let us know by emailing the team at the MOD on: [covenant-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:covenant-mailbox@mod.uk).

## Wider society

- The Armed Forces Community Covenant Scheme was launched in June 2011.
- It encourages local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their area and it has its own grant scheme to fund projects that raise awareness of the issues they face.
- Find out if your area has already set up a community covenant – if not, see [www.mod.uk/covenant](http://www.mod.uk/covenant) to see how one could help your area and enable you to access funding to support local projects.

### Where can I get more help?

- This leaflet is aimed at Armed Forces families, but there are two others aimed at Veterans and Serving personnel you may wish to read.
- To read the full report on all the Armed Forces Covenant and see details of what the government has committed to, go to [www.mod.uk/covenant](http://www.mod.uk/covenant), email: [covenant-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:covenant-mailbox@mod.uk), telephone: 0207 218 9110
- You can seek further advice from the Chain of Command, your nearest HIVE [www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Hive/HiveSupportDuringDeployments.htm](http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Hive/HiveSupportDuringDeployments.htm) or the Family Federations (Navy: [www.nff.org.uk](http://www.nff.org.uk). Army: [www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk), RAF: [www.raf-ff.org.uk](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk).)

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