

Families First Newsletter

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Mike Green

A Message from DIO's Chief Executive

Dear Family,

Welcome to our first Families First newsletter which you can now expect fortnightly via our gov.uk page and our newly launched Defence Connect page.

In my last correspondence to you before Christmas, I spoke about wanting to ensure we kept you up to date about the situation regarding Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and the performance of the new contracts. We have now launched our Defence Connect Page and our Families First newsletter, to allow us to provide you with, not only information on the measures we are taking to address the performance of our Accommodation contracts, but also the investment that is going on across Service Family Accommodation to make improvements. Getting this service right for you and your family is my priority and I will continue to work with suppliers to make sustained improvements.

I hope you find this newsletter insightful and encourage you to follow our [Defence Connect Page](#) to stay connected.

Update on Performance Against Accommodation Contracts

Since the launch of the new Accommodation contracts in April 2022, we appreciate that the service provided has fallen short of what you expect and deserve. In October 2022, a dedicated 'Rectification Team' was stood up. This team is formed of both DIO and our suppliers (Pinnacle, Amey & VIVO) and is focused on getting to the root of the problems and making improvements for families. There has been significant progress made in some areas, but we acknowledge there is still a way to go before we are providing the Families First service we promised.

These improvements are focussing on the following key areas:

Complaints

Complaints numbers were at an unsatisfactory level prior to the Rectification Team standing up. Since October, complaints have reduced by 47%. This has been achieved through a combination of actions including additional staff being employed at the National Service Centre and out in the field, as well as 2 additional Regional Managers.

Repairs and maintenance

The backlog of repair and maintenance tasks peaked in early December at 21,100. This number has reduced considerably since then, and as of 23 January this now stands at 8,532. Our suppliers have increased their resource and we are closely monitoring the situation to ensure the numbers continue to decrease.

Additionally, weekly meetings with the Rectification Team ensure that the process for allocating priority to jobs is constantly reviewed and improved. There is also continued work around missed appointments to ensure their causes have been captured and the numbers continue to fall.

Call wait times

During peak periods, it was taking far too long for families to be able to report an issue with their home. Pinnacle has increased resource in the National Service Centre which has resulted in the call wait time now remaining stable, with an average call wait time of 4 minutes.

Compensation

Due to the extensive delays families have experienced in receiving compensation, DIO and its suppliers have taken the following actions:

- Changed voucher provider to assist in speeding up the process
- Re-assessed the categories of 'out of pocket claims' which has resulted in more claims now being paid via bank transfer.

Heating

There was a significant spike in families experiencing heating and hot water failures in December and the number of families left without heating for over 24 hours was unacceptable.

DIO and its suppliers responded by:

- Increasing the number of heating engineers
- Increasing resource at Pinnacle's National Service Centre
- Introducing a new triage-based approach to speed up diagnosis of faults and enable remote fixes by engineers
- Introducing a compensation offer of up to £20 per day to cover increased energy costs due to using temporary heaters

Our suppliers have completed over 10,000 heating repairs since November, and the total number of homes which are without heating due to contractor delay is now in single figures. However, we recognise that the focus must be on preventing these issues from occurring in the first place.

Damp and mould

Following the increased reporting of damp and mould, a Damp & Mould Task Force has been formed to identify and tackle the issue, with the worst affected homes prioritised and dealt with as quickly as possible.

What's Next?

We recognise that the work should not stop at the rectification plans and we are working with our suppliers to ensure sustained levels of improvement and to provide families with the standard of service we promised them. This includes:

- A further £176 million being invested in the 2022/23 financial year for improvements to a further 20% of homes most in need of them. Of this, £73 million will be spent on replacement windows, doors, roofs and upgrades to thermal efficiency and ventilation to reduce the occurrence of damp and mould in homes.
- Developing a 5-year Estate Improvement Plan to invest in modernising homes for our families
- A Move-In Standards Review which is currently underway. This work has involved a complete review and improvement of Move-In Standards to guarantee that all homes are handed over to families in optimum condition.
- A proposal for High Intensity Refurbishments which aims to see entire estates most in need of modernisation overhauled in very short time frames, without compromising on quality.

If your home is going to be impacted by any improvement works, you will be notified as appropriate.

Key Dates to Note

01 February – Local housing surgery (VIVO), Winchester

23 March – Local housing surgery (Amey), Lossiemouth

SFA Investment across the Estate: A Snapshot

Recently completed projects

Investment in Service Family Homes



Helston, Cornwall

Works included:

- External Wall Insulation
- Bathroom refurbishments
- New doors and windows
- Replacement porch roofs
- Heating upgrades
- Est. carbon saving of 1.3 tonnes per home per year



Ardpeaton, Scotland

Works included:

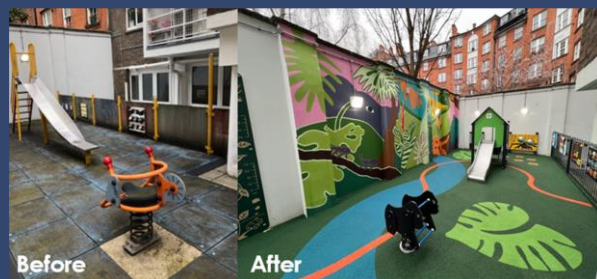
- New roofs, doors and windows,
- Full internal refurbishment,
- Decorating
- New carpets throughout

Investment in Service Family Communities

Ainse Road, Catterick



Victoria House, Central London



**Defence
Infrastructure
Organisation**

Useful Links

[Contact Pinnacle](#)

[Make a request for compensation](#)

[Reporting damp and mould](#)

[Join the new SFA Defence Connect page](#)

[Forces Help to Buy is here to stay](#)