



## Frequently Asked Questions for the MOD housing community

DIO and our Industry Partners recognise that this is a very anxious time for you all and our priority is to ensure your safety and that of our staff and supply chain partners.

Working closely with our stakeholders, including the Families Federation, we have captured frequently asked questions (FAQs) from Serving Personnel and their families. We hope you will find the answers useful and informative.

**This list is not exhaustive and we realise that Service Personnel and their families will have many more questions over the coming weeks. We will seek to address all questions as they arise and will be adding to this FAQ list so please do keep checking it. DIO is not the policy holder for many questions asked but we are liaising with other MOD departments to develop as comprehensive a list of answers to your questions as we can.**

### DIO Accommodation Team

#### Safety, Repair and Maintenance

##### **Will repair and maintenance work on SFA continue?**

Yes. In line with Government guidance, repair and pre-planned maintenance works can continue although we have introduced additional health and safety measures. Where occupants are self-isolating, operatives will not enter a property to undertake planned or non-critical reactive maintenance for a period of 17 days or until such time as it is confirmed that there is no longer any risk. Operatives will attempt to resolve critical tasks with self-isolating occupants through telephone dialogue. If resolution is not practical, Regional DIO/Amey teams will seek to identify alternative temporary accommodation. **To ease pressure on the Amey Helpdesk, please delay your call until the pandemic starts to subside.**

##### **Can DIO offer any assurances about the health of those attending SFA?**

We fully understand the concerns of Service families at this difficult time and the steps set out below are aimed at protecting the health and safety of Service families, Amey and supply chain personnel. All NHP works will be undertaken in accordance with Government guidelines; these include:

- Confirming in advance whether anyone in the property is self-isolating or social distancing.
  - Wearing an Amey ID card in a visible position.
  - Remaining more than 2m from other people.
  - Requesting occupants move to another room/area while the work is carried out.
  - Cleaning tools and equipment afterwards using sanitisation spray or wipes.
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- Washing hands for 20+ seconds using soap & warm water at the nearest available hand wash basin on arrival and before departure.
- Using anti-bacterial hand gel where there are no washing facilities.

### **Will scheduled gas and electrical safety testing continue? If not, will I have to move out of my SFA?**

Advice from the Health & Safety Executive is that such tests should continue as it remains DIO's responsibility (as landlord) to ensure the safety of properties. It is therefore planned these tests will continue.

### **Where SFA families have significant separate health issues (eg undergoing medical treatment) will pre-planned works cease until Government advice changes?**

Families will be able to defer pre-planned improvement works but not normally pre-planned statutory checks such as gas and electrical safety testing.

### **Occupancy Services (Allocations, Move-In/Out, Licences etc)**

#### **Will Service families be granted a 'charge holiday' should a spouse lose their job due to Covid-19?**

For those Service families living in SFA or SSFA (or being accommodated under FAM arrangements at Faslane or Aldershot) there are no plans to introduce a 'charge holiday'. Service families living in their own properties or renting a property under their own arrangements, are advised to contact their mortgage provider or landlord. If any Service personnel have any concerns over financial hardship because of the impact of Covid-19, they are advised to contact Unit HR staffs.

**Amended: The Government has announced that landlords cannot evict a tenant for a period of 3 months. How will that work for a) those Service personnel issued with a Notice to Vacate; b) those personnel occupying SFA under 'surplus licence' arrangements; and c) those personnel occupying SFA under the sub-let scheme.**

For Service personnel remaining in SFA as an Irregular Occupant beyond their Notice to Vacate date, DIO will follow Government direction on the protection of renters and landlords affected by Covid-19. DIO will therefore not take legal action to evict such occupants for a period of at least three-months. Please, however, continue to make regular accommodation charge payments, and respond to any contact by the DIO Loss of Entitlement Team. [DIORDAccn-LOETeam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIORDAccn-LOETeam@mod.gov.uk)

Similarly, for Service personnel occupying SFA under a 'surplus licence', should the property be required for Service reasons (eg to meet the requirements of entitled Service personnel), then DIO will not take any action to regain possession for a period of at least three-months.

For civilian personnel occupying SFA under the sublet scheme, if the property is required for Service reasons, DIO will, again, not take action to regain possession for a period of at least three-months.

#### **Amended: What is the position if I'm living in Substitute Service Family Accommodation?**

The provision of Substitute Service Family Accommodation is based on the issue of a Non-Availability Certificate (NAC) by DIO. In line with normal practice, a Service family would not be expected to move from their SSFA during an assignment period. Therefore, the Service family will continue to occupy their Substitute SFA. Should MOD operational requirements or a period of self-isolation take occupation beyond a previously advised or anticipated Move Out date, you will need to notify the DIO Substitute Accommodation Team (SAT), so that Mears can be advised of a change to the tenancy; they can be contacted via e-mail: [DIORDAccn-SubAccn@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIORDAccn-SubAccn@mod.gov.uk)

#### **Will CAAS transition charge increases still take place on 1 Apr?**

CAAS transition charge increases will proceed as planned as they are part of a long-term staggered approach. If personnel are concerned about financial hardship, they should seek advice from their unit HR staffs.

**Amended: What will happen to SFA moves following Government advice to not move house?**

Entitled Service personnel and their families will not be required to vacate their current SFA due to the COVID-19 restrictions, including Service personnel being discharged from the Services. Service leavers will be able to remain in their SFA until restrictions are lifted or they apply for retention of their SFA under the Service Leavers policy, paying the appropriate charges.

The position of those Service personnel being re-assigned for operational reasons (including support to Covid-19) is being considered separately. Service personnel who believe they fall into this category should speak with their single Service Manning Authority for confirmation, as evidence will be required to support a house move.

**New Question: What is the position for Service personnel or Service leavers planning to move out of SFA or SSFA, into privately rented or purchased property, but find they cannot because of Covid-19 restrictions?**

DIO understands that there are a number of Service personnel or Service leavers who had planned to move into their own homes (either owned or privately rented) before the lockdown but are now unable to do so due to restrictions on movement and are understandably concerned about continuing to pay SFA charges while meeting either mortgage or rental payments in the new property.

Such cases are already being considered by DIO's Occupancy Management Team. The general approach adopted is to provide concessions on SFA charges where the serving person is able to demonstrate that a move had been planned before the lockdown but, due to circumstances beyond their control, they are no longer able to vacate the SFA fully.

DIO would like to reassure Service personnel that we will consider each case on its merits, once staffed through the CofC. Such cases should be referred to the Occupancy Management Team ([DIORDAccn-OccMgtTeam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIORDAccn-OccMgtTeam@mod.gov.uk)). It is important to note that the Service person must keep in touch with the Occupancy Management Team so that their situation can be reassessed when restrictions change.

In cases where a Service person/family cannot complete a physical handover of their SFA back to DIO because of Covid-19 restrictions, arrangements can be made for a 'virtual' Move-Out to take place on, or as close as possible to, the agreed date. This can take place only if the SFA is vacant and in a ready state to be handed back. However, where it has not been possible to move all possessions out of SFA due to the restrictions of movement, DIO will consider on a **case by case basis** whether a charge concession can be backdated to when the move-out was expected to take place.

**Amended: Are normal assignment moves still going ahead?**

In line with the recent direction from MOD and single Services, only those assignments considered essential to operational capability and/or Defence's COVID-19 response will take place. The notification on the overall impact on Postings and Household Moves in response to Covid-19 is [here](#).

***As all non-essential assignments have been suspended***, we will therefore be contacting occupants, via the E1132 application system or by text message, to cancel move in appointments and, where necessary, withdraw offers of SFA. In such circumstances, occupants will retain their current SFA. The non-essential assignment suspension takes effect immediately and initially will apply until 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020. The position will continue to be monitored and further advice will be issued in due course. ***It should be noted that a number of Move-Ins will take place to house repatriated Service personnel and their families from some overseas locations.***

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**Amended: Are requests for surplus SFA for those in an established Long-Term Relationship still being considered?**

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In line with the suspension of non-essential assignments, DIO will not process any applications for surplus accommodation from eligible Service personnel until further notice. Any issues arising from this should be referred to the Occupancy Management Team ([DIORDAccn-OccMgtTeam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIORDAccn-OccMgtTeam@mod.gov.uk)).

### **Will families be eligible for relief from SFA charges?**

We understand this is a very worrying time for Service families with the impact of Covid-19 affecting families in different ways. However, charges for SFA will continue to be deducted from salaries in the normal way through JPA and if Service personnel have any concerns over financial hardship because of the impact of Covid-19, they are advised to contact their Unit HR staffs.

### **Amended: What is the situation with Agility and their removal companies?**

MOD and the single Services have issued notification on the overall impact on Postings and Household Moves in response to Covid-19 (see link above). Following the suspension of all non-essential assignments, affected SFA personnel are being contacted and advised that move-ins have been cancelled. If you would like to confirm that your move has been cancelled you should contact [Agility](#).

### **New: What happens to SFA charges should a Service family, exceptionally, take over a new SFA but cannot handback, for whatever reason, their previous property?**

Service families facing that situation will only be charged for one property, with the normal 14-day dual occupancy period being waived. Once the overall position normalises, then the intention will be to give occupants a period of time to complete the Move-Out process. Should this not be arranged and completed in a timely manner, DIO may instruct Amey to re-commence charges, until completion of the Move Out process.

### **New: What about other SFA charging circumstances during Covid-19?**

It is not possible to cover all individual circumstances in the FAQ. Service personnel should raise any SFA charging issues with the [Amey Occupancy Services Helpdesk Team](#) in the first instance. If necessary, they will refer the matter to DIO who will review and advise.

## **DIO Accommodation**

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