

Guidance on the Government Funding to Improve Service Family Accommodation - Guidance

Overview of Fiscal Stimulus

On 17 July 2020 the Defence Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer jointly announced £200 million of new Government funding as a fiscal stimulus package to improve accommodation for Service personnel and to help stimulate the construction industry which had been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The provision of good quality accommodation is at the heart of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Amount allocated to the Service Family Accommodation estate

£122 million has been allocated for improving the MOD SFA estate (the remainder has been allocated to improving Single Living Accommodation). £86 million will be spent in financial year 2020/21 and £36 million in financial year 2021/22. This is new money and is in addition to £103 million already allocated for SFA improvement work in this financial year, together with £20 million for new properties in areas of high demand to reduce the reliance on substitute housing and provide families with security of tenure.

How the new money will be spent

These works will focus on: making homes more energy efficient and helping to reduce Service families' utility bill charges; refurbishing currently uninhabitable void properties to provide more choice for Service families and further reduce Substitute Accommodation costs; replacing out of date fixtures and fittings to maintain properties at Decent Homes Standard as a minimum while providing more modern homes; replacing older play parks to improve Service children's experience and aid their development; and improving roads and street lighting to ensure public safety. Taken together, this will improve the lived experience and lived environment for Service personnel as well as meeting wider Government sustainability targets.

Number of properties to be improved

The works will allow more than 800 long term void properties, suffering from structural, fire or flood damage, to be refurbished fully for allocation to Service families. In addition, improvements will be made to a further 2,700 properties, enabling c3,500 homes overall to benefit from upgrade works. These numbers will be confirmed once all surveys are completed.

Types of work to be carried out at SFA

To improve the lived experience for Service families, the following works will be undertaken:

- Install solar panels to promote improved energy efficiency and reduce the MOD's carbon footprint.
- Install Electric Vehicle Charging Points.
- Undertake External Wall Insulation (EWI) to include double glazed windows and doors, and the replacement of loft insulation to a depth of 300mm to increase

thermal efficiency, aesthetic appeal (windows and doors) and reduce the occurrence of damp and mould.

- Replace kitchens and bathrooms (including water saving fixtures).
- Replace and upgrade heating systems, radiators, controls and pipework to include magnaflux and water softeners in hard water areas. This will improve energy efficiency and increase the life span of the system due to a reduction in calcium precipitation.
- Replace and upgrade electrical wiring to include Customer Consumer Units (CCU) to meet extant regulations.
- Install fire doors where required (internal door to garage and boiler room).
- Replace current single point smoke alarms, install smoke alarms in the room most frequently used for general daytime living and ensure one smoke alarm is fitted in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings. One heat alarm to be installed in every kitchen. All alarms to be ceiling mounted and interlinked. Carbon monoxide detectors to be fitted where there is a carbon-fuelled appliance (such as boilers, fires (including open fires), heaters and stoves) or a flue.
- Replace floor coverings (required to offset lifting of floor boards for heating pipes).
- Re-decorate (where walls are skimmed to allow pipe work to be chased into walls).
- Structural repairs where required (stabilisation works as needed based on site conditions).

Other works to be carried out on the SFA Estate:

To improve the lived environment for Service families, the following additional works will be carried out:

- Replace play parks where play equipment is in excess of 20 years old and can no longer be repaired, to improve play opportunities for families with young children.
- Replace roads that are pot holed, have reflective cracking and are more than 25 years old, to include line marking.
- Replace streetlights, with lamp heads to be replaced by solar photovoltaic heads to use renewable energy.

How properties have been chosen for the works:

SFA estates have initially been selected taking account of the enduring requirement and individual SFA have been selected based on condition to ensure the investment is maximised for the benefit of Defence and our Service families.

A robust methodology was developed to identify properties most in need of refurbishment. This methodology used a range of data including:

- SAP energy efficiency scores;
- Void rates;
- Asset replacement life-cycle expiry dates;
- Housing complaints data;
- Housing demand in the area; and

- Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) survey data.

However, it will be necessary to survey c2,700 properties to ensure the information held is up to date and accurate before decisions are made on whether they can be added to the programme.

Delivering the works:

Given the exacting timeframe to deliver the works, they will be delivered as Additional Works Services (AWS) under the National Housing Prime contract. This is the optimum route as it presents the least risk, in terms of supply chain capacity, time available, and success of delivery, and is a well established process on the NHP contract.

Start of the works:

Surveys of SFA began on 7 September, while instructed works are now underway at a number of locations across the UK. The pipeline of works, and associated approvals, will be finalised once all surveys are complete; full details of the programme will be provided separately at that point. All works will be completed by 31 March 2022.

SFA surveys:

Around 2,700 surveys will be undertaken with some 1,200 being carried out in occupied SFA. Letters are being issued to those occupants to advise of the survey appointment date and time; this will include details of the Covid-19 safety steps to be followed by the surveyor. To help facilitate this essential survey programme, the Chain of Command is requested to allow flexible duty time for those Service personnel occupying properties to be surveyed.

Some Service Families may have to move out of their accommodation for the works:

Fiscal Stimulus funding will be used to reburish void properties in the first instance. This will allow works to be carried out more quickly to meet the challenging in-year delivery timeframe. However, within the overall delivery programme, around 1,200 of the properties identified for potential works are currently occupied. Once surveys are undertaken and the overall programme finalised, DIO Accommodation will contact occupants in selected houses about the need to move out to allow works to take place.. While it is acknowledged that this will be unwelcome, some of the works to be undertaken on selected properties will be intrusive and it would be inappropriate for families to remain in their home during such works. In such circumstances, Service families will be entitled to a mid-tour move at public expense; their personal circumstances will be taken into account as part of this. To ensure this goes as smoothly as possible, we are developing a set of guiding principles to minimise any disruption for Service families. We will share these as soon as possible.

Moving back to SFA after works have been completed:

If required to Move-Out of their SFA to let improvement works take place, it is possible that Service families will move into a property that has not been upgraded. In such circumstances, every effort will be made to support a return to their previous property once the upgrade works have been completed, and should their personal circumstances permit.

CAAS Bands affected by the improvement works:

The position on CAAS Band reviews is set out in JSP 464 Vol 3 Part 1 (V15 – 20 Jul 20).

Frequency of Assessment 0601. DIO is to conduct a review of the SFA CAAS band of a property by visit, desktop, or full assessment of the property, as follows: a. On change of occupant; b. After any upgrade work on a property. Upgrade is defined as a replacement of the following building elements: bathroom; kitchen; external doors; windows; boiler and/or heating systems; cavity or external wall insulation; roof; or whole house refurbishment, including some but not necessarily all of the building elements listed. Where accommodation has been subject to improvement, it will be reviewed as part of the handover on completion of the work;

Effective Date for Change of Accommodation Charges 0603. The effective date of the charge is as follows: a. Date of occupation on move in to a property, or b. Changes in charges (both up and down) arising from CAAS assessment convened in accordance with a 6-yearly rolling programme or where there have been upgrades, should take effect 93 days after the date of the assessment. SFA occupants are to be notified at least 28 days in advance of the assessment visit.

The above approach will be followed for the Fiscal Stimulus work, both for families moving into newly refurbished properties, and for families who may have to move out of their SFA into new accommodation to allow refurbishment work to proceed.

Contribution to the Government's sustainability agenda:

Much of the improvement works will contribute to the Defence Sustainable Development Strategy. Where appropriate, solar panels and electric vehicle charging points will be installed, together with refurbishments such as external wall insulation, loft insulation, replacing roofs, installing new, efficient heating and hot water systems, fitting new doors and windows. All of those will contribute to improving thermal comfort for Service families, reducing the MOD carbon footprint and improving the SAP score for the property. Street lights will be replaced with Photovoltaic solar heads to maximise the use of renewable energy and reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) pollution.

In addition, to further contribute to sustainability, the works will include pre-work ecology surveys, the inclusion of conditions to reduce waste to landfill, and the maximising of recycling project generating waste and the use of sustainable materials.

Sustainability assessments will be carried out to assure that:

- Bats and protected species' surveys are completed where appropriate.
- Asbestos surveys are undertaken and any contaminated material will be dealt with in the recommended way.
- Good water management is highlighted to sub-contractors who will be held to account by regional teams for reducing waste that goes to landfill.
- Transport costs are reduced and site deliveries minimised where possible.